

Teaching International Teachers:  
How Saudi Arabian teachers experience learning about  
teaching during a New Zealand professional development  
course.

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the

degree

of Master of Teaching and Learning

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## Definitions

SAT	–	Saudi Arabian Teacher
ISTE	–	In-service teacher education
NZT	–	New Zealand teacher educator
PD	–	Professional development
DACRT	–	Deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching

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## **Abstract**

Tertiary teachers who travel to another country for professional development encounter difficulties studying in different cultural and educational contexts. This research study investigated how Saudi Arabian teachers of adult learners experience learning about teaching during a New Zealand professional development course. It is part of a larger investigation into ways to improve curriculum design for in-service teacher education short courses for international teachers.

A single case study was undertaken to investigate the views of a group of male Saudi Arabian teachers from tertiary technical institutions while in Aotearoa New Zealand to learn the English language, computing studies and adult education. An interpretive, participant observation method was used involving group interviews, written questionnaire, and personal journal. Focus groups were conducted at the beginning and end of the professional development programme to solicit pre-course expectations, identify post-course views of the in-service teacher education programme, and seek suggestions for improvements for future courses. Using a grounded theory approach, a coded analysis of the findings was conducted drawing out emergent themes from the participants' comments.

The findings were grouped into four tensions experienced by the participants. These included, the priority given to learning English language over improving their teaching skills; responding to boredom and lack of student engagement, and difficulties managing student behaviour as part of the student-teacher relationship; a desire to learn new practical teaching methods, rather than being taught the theory of teaching and learning; and differences between the Saudi Arabian and New Zealand learning environments. Responses to these tensions are discussed alongside a framework for high quality learning activities and implications are drawn for improving inter-relationships between teacher and learner. A mismatch was identified between prior expectations and assumptions by the participants and the actual design of the curriculum.

Cultural issues are discussed in the context of different educational worldviews, including the status and roles of the teacher in Western and Arab societies, employing a critical pedagogy, and curriculum design for teacher professional development. A model is proposed of deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching which may assist teacher educators in higher education and support the sustainability of in-service professional development for international teachers.

# Chapter 1 - Rationale

## Introduction

Culturally responsive ways to teach international tertiary teachers undertaking in-service teacher education (ISTE) professional development in teaching and learning within the vocational education sector have not been well documented. Certainly, as Palfreyman says, there is “sizeable literature on Teaching English as a Second Language, which has tackled cultural issues in a range of contexts, but in relation to language rather than content teaching” (Palfreyman, 2007, p. 2). Given the importance of international education within New Zealand it is worth investigating ways to help the various stakeholders improve the experience of international students, and for assisting tertiary teachers to take improved teaching skills back to their home country. This research study explores the experience of a group of ten Saudi Arabian male tertiary teachers (SATs) who arrived at Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) in July 2009 for an eight-week immersion course to learn the English language. This group followed about four dozen Saudi Arabian tertiary teachers who had come to study at CPIT in the previous three years. As well as English they undertook further studies simultaneously in applied computer science and in adult education, that is, the theory and practice of learning and teaching. Previous groups had reported positively about learning English and computing studies, however they were less than positive about the Adult Education segment of the ISTE. The New Zealand teacher educators (NZTs) who design and teach ISTE to teachers in tertiary technical institutes had no first-hand knowledge of the Saudi environment nor Arab and Muslim world views. They were concerned and confused by the unsatisfactory feedback from the SATs after their study at CPIT. The same may be experienced by others who teach international students in higher education.

This chapter lays the foundations for this research study and outlines the context for the questions that arose about the experience of SATs studying within New Zealand. International students studying abroad bring with them cultural capital and educational perspectives quite different from those of the places they choose to study. This group’s world view was immersed in Arab religious, cultural and educational traditions, which vary significantly from a Western world view. Their experience of learning about teaching during a New Zealand professional development course raises questions, such as the underlying purpose for coming to such a different cultural and educational setting, the expectations both of the SATs and other stakeholders in their home country and in New Zealand, and the assumptions within the design of



the curriculum of ISTE. These questions echo an overarching challenge for teachers keen to provide culturally responsive teaching for groups of international students.

The purpose of the course in Adult Education was to improve the teaching skills of the participants. As Race points out, “‘Teaching’ at any level can surely be summarised as a purposeful attempt to cause learning to happen by those being taught” (2010, p. 3), which presumes an agreement on the part of both the teacher and the learner on the outcomes of the study and the ways to achieve them. Yet staff who teach international students from cultures different from their own are often confused by certain behaviours, such as unexplained lateness or absence from classes, lack of commitment to the course of study, reluctance to join in some learning activities, and confusion or dissatisfaction with the curriculum. When international students enrol in higher education in another country, their very presence requires building up “intercultural communicative competence” (Byram, 1997, p. 3) within the institution, its staff, and also local and international students.

In this study a broad conception of culture is taken as “the shared patterns of behaviour and associated meanings that people learn and participate in within the groups to which they belong” (Whitten & Hunter, 1992, p. 3), or what Belenkey et al call ‘ways of knowing’ (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). The term *Western* is used to describe concepts and geography (usually New Zealand) in contrast to *non-Western* ones. This dichotomy is used as a shorthand means of referring to the unfamiliar and because we can most readily understand these unfamiliar perspectives by contrasting them with what we *do* know, that is, the Western tradition (Merriam, 2007, p. 3).

## **Background**

A contract for service between the Saudi Arabian government and CPIT was brokered by Polytechnics International New Zealand Limited (PINZ) to provide in-service professional development to teachers in technical colleges, specifically to “develop students’ skills in the fundamental principles and practices in technical education, including specific issues relating to assessment, delivery and course design in Adult Education contexts” (Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, 2009). PINZ was established in 1994 by a consortium that now includes 20 institutes of technology, polytechnics (ITPs) and universities in New Zealand (PINZ Education global specialists, 2010). The contract is part of on-going government policy to attract international full-fee paying students to supplement Vote Education appropriations. Tertiary education minister, Steven Joyce, estimates international education contributes more than \$NZD2

billion to the New Zealand economy and supports about 32,000 jobs (The official website of the New Zealand Government, 2011). New Zealand ITPs are state-subsidised institutions that offer “learning environments that are interactive, innovative and vocational ... [and which] offer certificates, diplomas, degrees and short courses that are highly regarded nationally and internationally” (ITPNZ, 2009).

The SATs are part of a centrally co-ordinated structure of higher education in Saudi Arabia, the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is expanding. Recently King Abdullah approved the establishment of 17 new colleges in different parts of the country, covering administrative sciences and finance, architecture and planning, business administration, medicine, medical sciences, pharmacology, engineering, computer science and information technology (Ghafour, 2008; University World News, 2008). The SATs instruct classes in ten different technical institutes among the 30 distributed throughout Saudi Arabia to all-male young adults, who are often reluctant learners. In Saudi Arabia a student may leave school when permission of his legal custodians (parents) is given, if not the student must complete school until the age of 18. For their ISTE during their semester break the SATs had selected New Zealand for immersion a very different cultural context from their own, primarily to improve their English language skills. English is a very desirable skill for teachers of computer studies world-wide.

I am a member of the team of New Zealand-born teacher educators in the Adult Education section of the Faculty of Humanities at CPIT, who provide ISTE to teachers in the vocational tertiary sector in ITPs and Private Training Enterprises (PTE's) around New Zealand, and short courses for international students from Bahrain, China, and Saudi Arabia. My background as a tertiary teacher for two decades at CPIT and in the UK was shaped within a bi-cultural Maori-Pakeha context, with a respect for the Treaty of Waitangi fostered while working in education and the media. Exposure to migrant refugees and other non-Pakeha ethnicities has developed within me an awareness of cultural differences. My respect for diversity is well captured in the *whakatauikī* coined by the first Māori King Pōtatau Te Wherowhero at his coronation, which the Tainui people regard as a *tongi* or prophetic saying, “Kotahi te kōhao o te ngira e kuhunu ai te miro mā, te miro where, te miro pango - There is but one eye of the needle through which white, red and black thread must go”(Broughton, Reed, & Karetu, 1996).

In short, several challenges faced the NZTs at the time of this case study, including unsatisfactory experiences with SAT groups, a lack of understanding of the expectations of these international students, gaps in literature, and assumptions about the curriculum being offered. All

these issues provided an opportunity to investigate a suitable culturally responsive teaching model for future courses for international teachers, based on the views of one such cohort. To that end, the following research question is framed: *How do Saudi Arabian teachers of adult learners experience learning about teaching from New Zealand teacher educators?*

This dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 2 reviews the literature associated with cultural studies and culturally responsive teaching. Chapter 3 reviews the curriculum for pedagogical studies for ISTE for SATs. Chapter 4 describes the choice of methodology, the data collection methods and discusses associated issues. Chapter 5 analyses the case study data. Chapter 6 discusses themes which emerge from the findings, proposes responses to tensions arising from these themes against a framework for high quality learning activities, and discusses the implications of this case study for teacher educators and other stakeholders. I propose a model that includes deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching (DACRT) for teaching international teachers. In Chapter 7 I acknowledge limitations and issues which this study has not attempted to address, and suggest further questions yet to be explored.

In short, this project, which employed a qualitative participative single case study methodology (Yin, 1994), explores questions around cultural issues, educational design and pedagogical issues, in the context of ISTE of international teachers studying in the tertiary vocational sector within the New Zealand context.

## Chapter 2 - Literature Review – culture and culturally responsive teaching

In this chapter I explore the language used in the literature about culture with a view to finding constructs that will help my understanding of cross-cultural issues that could affect the ways that Saudi Arabian vocational tertiary teachers (SATs) and the New Zealand teacher educator (NZT) interact with each other and then to try to identify some ideas that will help me better understand Arab culture and understandings of learning and possible future approaches to teaching at CPIT. The first section of the chapter discusses culture, the second section focuses more directly on Arab and Western cultural differences, and the third section explores the notion of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). At the end of each section I reflect on the kinds of questions this reading of the literature has raised for me. This literature review gives me a basis for later discussion about the perceptions of the SATs about cultural issues they raise – in line with grounded approaches to research this literature has not informed the questions or the analysis of data.

### Defining culture

Culture involves communication amongst individuals and groups, and can be both physical and non-touching in nature. Literature in cultural studies recognises culture as a social construction because it cannot exist outside of social contact and collaboration, and it develops over time within any human social grouping. Bogdan and Biklen refer to the inter-relations between people that are used to construct *meaning*, saying “there is an interaction between culture and the meanings people attribute to events” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 38). They give the example of a person blinking one eye. Blinking can be represented as twitching, winking, pretending to wink (and so putting the audience on), or rehearsing winking.

Most definitions of culture are related closely to education. They include notions of *acquisition*, such as the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behaviour (Spradley, 1980, p. 6) and *knowledge construction*, for example, Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008) refer to ‘ways of knowing’, or how people organise their world cognitively through language and other symbol systems. It involves how they construct knowledge, and how they pass it on from generation to generation (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008, p. 3). Sonia

Nieto agrees with the educational nature of culture, saying it is “*learned* ... not handed down through our genes, nor is it inherited” (S. Nieto, 1996, pp. 136-146, italics in the original).

Culture is broader than just ethnicity, but includes all those ways people share things in common which are distinctly human, learned, and which go to form our distinctive character. Culture is constantly evolving through experience and education. Nieto says “Steven Arviszu’s (1994) wonderful description of culture as a *verb* rather than a *noun* captures the essence of culture beautifully. That is, culture is dynamic, active, changing, always on the move” (S. Nieto, 2010, p. 10). Culture is the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behaviour (Spradley, 1980, p. 6). By virtue of our human nature we are always immersed in the various cultures we belong to; they help create and reinforce our identities. We question our very right to exist without other existences like our own. However, trying to describe our own cultures is akin to asking a fish to describe the water it is swimming in. In an educational setting this is particularly important because of the complexity of what happens during the learning process.

It is difficult to fully objectify our own personal cultures, although we are able to analyse various essential aspects of all cultures. Gerald (1972) claims we cannot judge ourselves unless we see a continuity in other people and things and concepts. Although they may find it difficult to articulate dissonance when confronted by cultural differences, the international student cannot avoid being affected by them and remain unchanged, because, as Lewis says “culture is dynamic, not static” (Lewis, 2003, p. 261).

### ***Cultural difference in social settings***

Understanding the complex nature of culture is important to develop a critical, instead of a romantic, perspective of one’s own and other peoples’ cultures. Just as there is no such thing as ‘pure race’, there is likewise no ‘pure culture’; that is, cultures influence one another, and even minority cultures and those with less status have an impact on majority cultures, sometimes in dramatic ways (S. Nieto, 2010, p. 11). Using the term *hybridity*, Nieto acknowledges multiple cultures, which complicates the idea of cultural identity. This means that culture is “always heterogeneous and complex; it also implies that assimilation or cultural preservation are not the only alternatives” (S. Nieto, 2010, p. 12).

Both teachers and learners bring to the learning experience cultural capital, which acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status (Bourdieu, 2001; Harker, 1990). Cultural capital deeply influences the learning process from enrolment to final assessment. As George and Louise Spindler explain,

teachers carry into the classroom their personal cultural background. They perceive students, all of whom are cultural agents, with inevitable prejudice and preconception. Students likewise come to school with personal cultural backgrounds that influence their perceptions of teachers, other students, and the school itself (Spindler & Spindler, 1994, p. xix).

Together students and teachers construct, mostly without being conscious of doing it, an environment of meanings enacted in individual and group behaviours, of conflict and accommodation, rejection and acceptance, alienation and withdrawal (Spindler & Spindler, 1994).

Culture is both dynamic and also a distinctly *human* coding system. Culture is dynamic, active, changing, always on the move, deeply entangled with economic and political privilege, and constantly evolving, “and the reason that it evolves is because *human beings change it*” (S. Nieto, 1996, p. 142, italics in the original). Culture includes the systems of values, beliefs, and ways of knowing that guide communities of people in their daily lives (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008, p. 3). Gerald captures the deeply human characteristic of culture, saying

man projects his cultural and racial images upon the universe and he derives a sense of personal worth from the reflection he sees gazing back at him. For he defines himself and the world in terms of others like him. He discovers his identity within a group (Gerald, 1972, p. 373).

The *context* in which we experience cultures impinges on how we view them and helps to explain how different people react to cultures unlike their own, especially if they appear to be at odds with the context, or appear culturally irrelevant. Trying to make sense of this dilemma is captured by Geertz’s term ‘thick’ when he describes culture as “interworked systems of construable signs (what, ignoring provincial usages, I would call symbols), culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is, *thickly* – described” (Geertz, 1973, p. 14). I understand this to mean that in effect, teachers and learners try to make sense of their situation whilst ‘in the thick of it’. Sometimes the context may relate to the culture associated with a certain discipline, and to the conceptual gateways or portals associated with it, when the learner experiences a sense of dislocation or liminality, which can lead to communication difficulties and misconstrued meanings (Meyer & Land, 2005).

There are many ways we convey cultural meanings. In discussing what they call ‘cultures of communication’, Cortazzi and Jin (1997) argue that the real challenge with differences in cultures of communication is that they often lead to wrong assessments of those who use them. “For example, if students from the Middle East use the heavy intonation, relatively loud voices and rhetorical exaggeration which are acceptable (or desirable) in their native Arabic, they may be seen by British tutors and students (quite wrongly) as overbearing or aggressive” (Cortazzi & Jin,

1997, p. 79). This leads to a consideration of power in the inter-relations between learner and teacher.

Power and economics are widely referred to in the literature on culture and language (Fairclough, 1989) and if, as Sir Francis Bacon claimed, “knowledge is power” (Bacon, 1597) then accordingly those cultures which control access to knowledge will be advantaged. The content of the curriculum offered to international students contains presumptions embedded in the nature of Western pedagogy, which is premised on certain worldviews of education. The design and delivery of educational curricula helps ensure one culture’s hegemony over others, that “unequally privileges students from the dominant culture over students from subordinate cultures” (Darder, 1991, p. 35). Nieto claims that “indeed, what are often presented as linguistic and cultural differences are above all differences in power” (S. Nieto, 2010, p. 12). Influence from various cultures has always been carried across geographic and other boundaries. Closely allied to power is economic influence. Today, in a world of rapidly globalising business, electronic proximity, the political-economic associations, the ability to interact successfully with foreign partners in the spheres of commercial activity, diplomatic intercourse, and scientific interchange is seen as increasingly essential and desirable (Lewis, 2003, p. 67). Which invites the question, who serves to benefit most from the hegemony of the Western ‘scientific’ perspective which is in evidence in the schools and universities of the non-Western world, where Western textbooks, theories, and research are often valued over local or regional resources (Merriam, 2007, p. 12)?

Economic issues influence cross-cultural teaching and learning. With increasing commodification of the higher education sector globally, concern about international students is as much political and economic as it is pedagogical and what is not always acknowledged is “the culturally imperialistic way in which concerns about language and academic skills of international students are considered” (McLean & Ransom, 2005, p. 45). Some educational literature makes this overt, for example concerns about the curriculum and teacher awareness of cultural differences, ethnocentric attitudes and global consciousness can be found in the recommendations of organisations such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO (Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2005b, p. 502). Antonia Darder distinguishes between the *dominant culture*, which refers to “the ideologies, social practices and structures that affirm the central values, interests, and concerns of those who are in control of the material and symbolic wealth in society” and the *subordinate culture*, which refers to “groups who exist in social and material subordination to the dominant culture” (1991, p. 30). Critical educators perceive their primary function as emancipatory and their primary purpose as commitment to creating the conditions for students to learn skills, knowledge, and modes of inquiry that will allow them to examine critically the role

that society has played in their self-formation (Darder, 1991, p. xvii). More specifically, critical pedagogy is designed to give students the tools to examine how society has functioned to shape and constrain their aspirations and goals (Giroux, 1981, 1983). A major concern of critical pedagogy is that students are helped to develop the critical capacities to reflect, critique and act to transform the conditions under which they live. Critical pedagogy is one of the few educational perspectives that recognizes the need to develop a sensitivity to aspects of culture (Darder, 1991, p. xvii). However, there is a risk that the different understandings of power may create confusion for both the learner and the teacher. For example, where the perception of power distance (Hofstede, 2001) in each society is not the same.

Generalisation is common when discussing cultures. The literature refers to the closely allied concept of *ethnocentrism*, which is "the view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it" (Sumner, 1906, p. 13), and the penchant to view one's own cultural group as superior to others; "a tendency common to most, if not all, human societies" (Reagan, 2000, p. 3). Reagan (2005) extends the notion of ethnocentrism into two areas, cultural and epistemological. *Cultural ethnocentrism* manifests ethnocentrism in individual scholars and their work, as well as to the sociocultural context that has helped to form and support such individual idiosyncratic biases (Reagan, 2000, p. 4). The concept of cultural ethnocentrism can be applied in a range of cultural settings, from individual to groups, societies, countries and even collections of countries. For example, terms like 'Oriental', 'Asian', 'Western' denote geographical regions, and have been used to describe something 'foreign' to the user. Said (1978) claims that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self. Meanwhile *epistemological ethnocentrism* deals not so much with individual assumptions and biases, but rather with those common to an entire field of study (Reagan, 2000, p. 4), such as Western views of pedagogy. These issues are discussed in Chapter 3.

Another generalisation that sits alongside ethnocentrism, is the practice of *stereotyping*. Psychologists say this is a natural phenomenon, whereby all humans develop mental categories in order to make sense of their environment. In other words, a stereotype is any categorical generalisation for people or social groups that ignores individual or social variability and difference which ultimately affects our behaviour (McNabb, 1986). Like ethnocentricity it is inherently mistaken because it is non-discriminatory, belies the possibility of individual difference, and runs counter to the grounded, participatory model of research as used here.



There is general agreement in the literature over what has been termed *culture shock*. The notion, first promulgated by Sverre Lysgaard (1955) identifies various stages visitors face when exposed to a new cultural environment. Known as a 'U-curve of adjustment', it describes a period of disillusionment as one seriously copes with living with a new culture on a day-to-day basis. From an initial 'honeymoon' period; through hostile, aggressive and fatigue stages; to a time of 'culture shock'; and lastly a 'recovery' phase. The visitor moves from culture surprise, to culture stress, to irritation and culture fatigue caused by stimulus overload, followed by culture shock and, with time and support, adjustment. Unfortunately, Lysgaard's model of adjustment is not helpful in defining where, or to what extent, any particular person may be experiencing culture shock.

### ***Fostering cultural interactions***

Exposure to other cultures – such as through teachers with different understandings of the world - can change our perspectives of ourselves and consequently our own cultures. The context may involve the learning environment for a foreign fee-paying adult student in another country, such as Aotearoa New Zealand. In Unit Standard 7091 the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) defines New Zealand's cultural environment as the rich and complex cultural heritage resulting from the unique and diverse mix of people who have made this country home, and defines a culturally safe and inclusive learning environment as,

one that ensures that the cultural background and needs of individuals and groups (tutor(s) and learners) are identified, recognises and respects those backgrounds and associated values, and takes pro-active steps to meet the identified needs so that the learning outcomes can be achieved to the fullest extent of the learner capabilities (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009).

NZQA places the onus on the educational provider to support these objectives, and to recognise that Māori culture sets Aotearoa apart from the rest of the world and provides the unique flavour of being a New Zealander.

When experiencing the aspects of different cultures an international student may see themselves as a tourist rather than a sojourner. Language teacher Michael Byram distinguishes between the *tourist* who remains essentially unchanged, and the *sojourner*, who "has the opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others' conditions" (Byram, 1997, p. 2). Although international students enrol in a course of study, formal education is not required for the four aspects of interaction across frontiers of different countries – knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction - because these can be acquired through experience and reflection, without the intervention of teachers and educational institutions (Byram, 1997, p. 33). Merriam

agrees that informal is a valid means of learning, saying “education has become synonymous with ‘schooling’, such that adult learners have a difficult time thinking of their learning as anything but participation in formal classes. Informal learning which adults engage in on a daily basis is rarely identified as important learning” (Merriam, 2007, pp. 5-6).

## **Reflection**

Cultures change as a result of the decisions that we make about our traditions, attitudes, behaviours and values. Teaching and learning can involve contradictions faced by learners and teachers, particularly when their cultural perspectives are in conflict. As a sojourner, the visitor may knowingly seek to learn about cultural differences, yet experience tension as a result of them. Tension may result from the hegemony of a different worldview being embedded in the curriculum, such as those described by NZQA for a New Zealand learning context. Influencing students from non-Western countries may be a means of using Western educational notions to influence non-Western life. Raising the awareness of teachers and learners about issues such as cultural imperialism as part of the curriculum or discourse of the classroom would involve a critical pedagogy, an educational approach rooted in the tradition of critical theory. A question arises regarding to what degree providing pastoral assistance and culturally responsive teaching will help minimise the length of the stressful phases and speed up the recovery phase of culture shock. Could this be one of the roles of a teacher of international learners? A further question may be whether it is possible to create the notion of a third space, where cultures come together in a way that creates an agreed (third) culture without destroying or seeking to change the original cultures of either group.

## **East meets West**

This section introduces some literature about Islamic/Muslim/Arab culture, in particular in relation to education and schooling before exploring some ideas about the how cultural differences between Eastern and Western people might lead to difficulties or misunderstandings. This section is particularly relevant, not because it impacted on my conversations with the SATs, but because of its impact on my analysis and my understanding about ways we, the NZTs at CPIT, might work with, support and learn from future sojourners.

### ***Religion in the curriculum***

Religious differences raise a number of challenges for educators. Religion influences the way many people think, perceive, and behave (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009, p. 236). Values such as

morality, hard work, and caring often carry religious overtones. Religion intertwines with culture when religion-based practices become associated with particular cultures, but that does not mean that everyone in that culture adheres to the primary religion's strictures (Garcia, 2011, p. 27-28). Educators themselves vary in their beliefs about the role of a religious perspective in education, so misunderstanding, and conflicts, may arise that prevent effective learning (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009, p. 239). When discussing cultural communication in the classroom therefore religion needs to be considered. As in any human organisation, each religious tradition carries within it dynamics that influence the ways members of the faithful community communicate with each other, and with those who do not belong to that tradition. Cortazzi and Jin say there are cultural gaps between what is valued and expected in a British academic culture and the expectations students bring with them based on their educational experience elsewhere (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, p. 78). In Western countries "independence, separation, and hierarchies characterize a Western perspective, a view in direct contrast to most non-Western worldviews" (Merriam, 2007, p. 3). It dates back to classical Greek culture, which promoted personal freedom, individuality, and objective thought (Nisbett, 2003, p. 30), influencing some religious viewpoints.

There is a gulf between an educational system born of a British (originally Christian) heritage and those from an Islamic one. In Saudi Arabia a communal, faith-based tradition prevails. Jamjoom explains that Islamic education is emphasized throughout all levels of the school system in Saudi Arabia. Its subjects are Quran, Tajwid (conventions of Quranic recitation), Tafsir (Quranic Interpretation), Hadith (sayings of the Prophet), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and Tawheed (the Oneness of God). Failure in any one of the above subjects requires the student to repeat the whole academic year (Jamjoom, 2010, p. 547). Most of these subjects are taught as far as University level, but the amount of religious teaching varies. In subjects like art, history and administration, Islamic studies account for over forty percent, compared to the ten to fifteen percent of the curriculum which is dedicated to technical subjects, where technical colleges such as King Fahid University of Petroleum and Minerals use English as the main medium of teaching (Prokop, 2003). Misunderstanding is a possible outcome where communication is influenced by fundamentally different world views, especially between secular and faith-based education systems. In one case 'faith' is invisible, or at least kept relatively private, while in the other it is explicitly acknowledged.

Religious world views are usually overlooked in the tertiary sector in New Zealand, and there is little concern for the spiritual in the curriculum of state-funded institutions. In a similar way Aronowitz and Giroux describe how the hidden curriculum functions in American public

schools curricula often ignore the histories of women, racial minorities, and the working class (1985, pp. 147-148). In the Gulf region residents are said to be quite conscious of the value of their cultural heritage and Islamic studies have a particular place in the school curriculum (Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2005b, p. 508). Unlike the West, the Arab perspective is less focused on the worldly and more on the spiritual side of learners' experience. Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas explains that, for a person immersed in an Islamic world-view,

each man is like a kingdom in miniature; a microcosmic representation of the macrocosmos. He is a dweller of his self's city wherein is enacted his *dīn* (the concept of religion). Since in Islam the purpose of seeking knowledge is ultimately to become a good man, and not a good citizen of the secular state, the system of education must in Islam reflect the man and not the state (Al-Attas, 1999, p. 38).

Al-Attas (1998) concludes that the modern universities, which are based on Western models, do not reflect 'man', but rather reflect the secular state. A secular world view is embedded in many Western curricula. There is a tension between Western education, in which external, societal and industrial imperatives are involved, and education in Islam, which pertains more to internal personal growth towards spiritual fullness, and its formulation as a system describes the model of man as perfected in the sacred person of the Holy Prophet. "So the Islamic university must reflect the Holy Prophet in terms of knowledge and right action; and its function is to produce men and women resembling him as near as possible in quality, each one according to his inherent capacities and potentials" (Al-Attas, 1999, p. 39). A New Zealand institute of technology exposes international students from an Islamic background to world views with different imperatives and values, such as the roles undertaken by the teacher.

### ***The status of the teacher in Muslim society***

The status and role of the teacher is an important part of the teacher-learner nexus. In concert with religious influence in the curriculum, in Islamic countries the role of the teacher is regarded as more than just a job, but a vocational, partly spiritual, calling. The moral and other standards are set high for those Muslims aspiring to be teachers. At the first World Conference on Muslim Education held in Makkah efforts were made to influence the kinds of people selected to teach. In the area of teacher-education and teacher-recruitment the conference stated:

Muslim teachers [should] be so trained that their ideas and concepts are inspired by the true Islamic faith, and their conduct as individuals and as social beings may be representative of Islamic values and principles, in order that they may set the best possible example to their students. (World Conference on Muslim Education (First), 1977, General Recommendation 6.1, pp. 102-109).

The status of teacher in Islam differs from the way teachers are perceived in mainly secular contexts, and this may affect the way learners would accept them in the role of

orchestrator of social contexts. To the Muslim “the teacher is like the sun, which being luminous itself sheds light. The student-teacher relationship is thus sacred” (Kamis & Mazanah, 2007, p. 30). As the Prophet is venerated in the Islamic tradition, the position of a teacher is revered in Muslim society, “... for that person is following in the footsteps of the Prophet, for becoming a keeper of God’s treasure; that is, knowledge” (Kamis & Mazanah, 2007, pp. 29-30). Therefore, the Muslim student is expected to observe adab (proper conduct) when interacting with the teacher. To explain, a story may be useful, in which Cortazzi and Jin (1997) express some aspects of what they call ‘cultures of learning with a story’.

Following a lecture about social science research methods, a Saudi Arabian student asked, ‘Which method is the best?’ The professor explained that the three approaches he had outlined all had advantages and disadvantages and the answer to the student’s question depended on the appropriateness of any particular method to help answer a particular research question. He gave detailed examples. This comprehensive answer (from the professor’s viewpoint) was not enough to satisfy the student who then asked ‘Which method do the staff use here?’ Again, the professor repeated the gist of the previous answer, adding that staff used a range of methods. Still not satisfied, the student finally asked, ‘Which method do you use yourself?’ The student, who was able and intelligent, later explained that his basic presupposition was that there is a best method, a best solution and a single ultimate answer, stemming from ideas of ultimate (religious) truth. ... At the time of hearing he believed the professor was hiding the answer but wanted students to find it themselves. Only later, after much discussion and reading, was he able to separate religious truth from research methods in social science (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, p. 84).

The different world views and perceptions of the roles of the teacher and assumptions made by either party demonstrated in the story above provide an example of causes for misunderstanding in the important inter-relationships between international students and their teachers. A sense of desire by a student for certainty, religious or otherwise, in an uncertain educational context can be problematic without a common understanding of educational world views.

Approaches to learning are inherently culturally bound with educational values, behaviours and skills taught from birth and “honed through the formative years without much conscious awareness” (McLean & Ransom, 2005, p. 46). For example, Chen and Sit (2009) discovered that Asian students in Australia became confused when faced with student-centered models of learning. Teacher-student relations in their home countries always required students to play a less active role, passively receiving knowledge rather than challenging teachers, who were regarded as the source of knowledge (Chen & Sit, 2009, p. 500). Effective teachers can have a significant role to play in creating a safe, culturally inclusive learning environment (Baskerville, 2011, p. 107), particularly international students experiencing the U-curve of culture shock (Lysgaard, 1955).

### ***East and West working together***

Most authors are in agreement about one similarity between Islamic and Western secular views of learning, that is, valuing education for itself. In secular countries, education is a core feature of life from early childhood through to the post-compulsory sector where 'life-long learning' is a tenet for governments of every political persuasion. Similarly, the imperative to become educated is a significant tenet of life for countries steeped in religion, such as Islam. "To the Muslims, the fact that the first command God handed down to an illiterate 40-year-old man is related to the acts of reading and writing suggests that learning and knowledge have to become a central theme in the teaching of Islam and the life of its followers" (Kamis & Mazanah, 2007, p. 24). According to Jamjoom, religion in Saudi Arabia is regarded as the bedrock of all educational decisions. In fact, the constitution of Saudi Arabia reflects the country's philosophy: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state with Islam as its religion; God's Book and the Sunnah [ways and practices] of His Prophet, peace be upon him, are its constitution, Arabic is its language" (Saudi Arabian Constitution, 2005, cited in Jamjoom, 2010, p. 547). A Muslim philosophy of education is a philosophy of lifetime learning based on literacy, and education is not only a requirement but a priority, so highly valued that "'an hour of learning is worth more than a year of prayer'" (Feng, Byram, & Fleming, 2009, p. 173).

The literature reveals a sharp contrast in world-views between East and West, their curricula, their educational systems and what values each represents. In the West, courses of study make hidden assumptions about the discipline of pedagogy, learners and learning. Reagan (2000) claims that the history of education, as it has been conceived and taught in the US (and I would add generally in the West), has focused almost entirely on the ways in which our educational tradition emerged, developed and changed over the course of the centuries. As a result, the ways that other societies have developed their educational traditions are likely to be overlooked.

It must be acknowledged that the use of terms such as 'West' and 'East' introduces a false dichotomy. Generalizing presents dangers, however it has its uses. I have considered whether or not to refer to terms such as 'Western' educational paradigms and 'Arab' or 'Muslim' behaviours and beliefs. Swartz notes that the categories 'Western' and 'non-Western' are our [Westerners'] creations, and reflect neither the diversity of beliefs (often mutually contradictory) that people hold, nor the commonalities that exist across apparently very different groups of people (Swartz, 2009). Of course, when classifying systems according to Western or non-Western, the dichotomy itself is a particularly Western concept (Merriam, 2007, p. 2). As Edward Said (1978) points out

Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. However, while the use of ethnocentric groupings such as 'West' and 'East' may be considered a flawed notion, Merriam supports the use of this dichotomy because it is a shorthand means of referring to the unfamiliar, and because we can most readily understand these unfamiliar perspectives by contrasting them with what we [from the West] *do* know, that is, the Western tradition (Merriam, 2007, p. 3). So what begins as a false dichotomy can emerge as an effective way of challenging and reforming racist and ethnocentric assumptions and biases. It can also inform thinking about cultural pedagogy.

### ***Physical and non-touching communication***

Between East and West a potential area for confusion lies in cultural ways of communicating. One area for possible miscommunication is physical exchange, such as touching, which is a sensitive area for all cultures. Touching relates to religious and cultural preferences and is worth noting because it intersects with the significant relationship between teacher and learner. Many Muslims find it unacceptable to touch a person of the opposite sex outside of their own family and "in Islamic countries, men and women are generally not allowed to shake hands" (Brown & Eisterhold, 2004, p. 138). In some Southeast Asian religions to pat someone on the head is a violation of what is regarded as a sacred temple, and an act of desecration, while the "approving, affectionate patting of children's heads is a common, accepted practice in Western societies" (Garcia, 2011, p. 27). For Māori, the head is to be respected, although, touching between either gender is usually acceptable.

In New Zealand it is not uncommon for teacher and learner to physically touch, whether male or female. Yet when two males shake hands a traditional kiwi male would regard a firm handshake as manly, and a weak one worthy of disdain; while a handshake in the Arab world "may not be as firm as one between two North Americans, because a firm handshake is considered aggressive" (Brown & Eisterhold, 2004, p. 138). A teacher would need to appreciate these and other physical communication distinctions when greeting an Arab student.

Touching is only one part of cultural communication. Other aspects involve non-touching bodily communication, e.g. using the eyes to communicate. Kiwi males would not make direct eye contact for long periods, preferring to stand alongside each other looking into the distance while conversing, yet Brown and Eisterhold point out that Saudi Arabian culture favours eye contact. "Arabs may be uncomfortable with a peripheral conversation such as one in which two people walk along side by side talking and may prefer to look at their conversational partners" (Brown & Eisterhold, 2004, p. 140). Lewis believes eye-contact is affected by climate, noticing that Latins,

Greeks and Arabs maintain almost constant eye contact with their interlocutor. He says, “Arabs often take off their sunglasses to heighten the effect” (Lewis, 2003, p. 22). It is quite possible that a teacher’s eye contact or physical contact may influence the learner’s relationship with them, and affect the learning process (Metge, 1986, 1995). Not only corporeal influences can affect our learning and attention spans, such as health, tiredness, and the time of day, but also other cultural and/or religious behaviours. For example, many Christians fast during Lent and Muslims fast during Ramadan and take time to pray at set times throughout the day. These and other cultural and/or religious practices can cause difficulties.

### ***Critical pedagogy towards building positive understandings***

Kostoulas-Makrakis says dangerous misunderstanding and stereotypical perceptions have been ascribed to the Arab world and Arabs, especially after 9/11. One of the most fundamental challenges today is “how to exchange views in order to build a positive relationship between the West and the Arab world based on mutual respect, recognition and understanding” (Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2005b, pp. 501-502). A critical pedagogy explores not only the implications of the curriculum in a wider social sense, but also is concerned with the overall roles of a teacher and their influence on those whom they teach. A dominant (e.g. Western) cultural viewpoint may subordinate other (e.g. Middle Eastern) cultures belonging to international students while in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ashraf is concerned about how images, ideas, ways of life and attractions of Western cities are conveyed by radio, television and the cinema, and he says “Muslim societies are becoming so accustomed to these non-Islamic and non-religious and even anti-religious thoughts and styles of living, that some Muslims are discussing to what extent *Shari’ah* could be modified in order to accommodate a modern lifestyle” (1985, p. 14). Islamic purists like Ashraf argue that the teachers at primary and secondary school levels should know the Islamic theory of education and “be taught to realise how superior is it to western theories of education” (Ashraf, 1985, p. 93). However, in a modern technical society, Ashraf acknowledges that “individual responsibility is jeopardised, and in nearly all Muslim countries technical know-how is in the hands of people trained in the West, brainwashed by western education and its style of living” (Ashraf, 1985, p. 15).

When discussing culture there is a trap of falling into generalisation, as Ashraf (1985) does. Instead, the literature also proposes the concept of a continuum of acculturation for educators who might work with any students, operating across a wide spectrum of world-views. Arab Palestinian psychiatrist Dwairy describes Arabs as belonging to one of three possible groups with different levels of acculturation; the ‘traditional’, the ‘bicultural’ and the ‘Westernised’



groups. He further states that the majority of Arabs belong at the traditional end of the continuum, that the vast majority of Arabs comply with the collective values at the expense of the self and accept the hierarchical structure of authority. They still adopt authoritarian collectivism in their familial, interpersonal, and social relationships. Education and socialization in homes and schools is still authoritarian (Dwairy, 1998, p. 22). Saudi Arabian teachers are likely to be naturally averse to change and adopting Western pedagogical models. As Jamjoom (2010) points out, the people of Saudi Arabia have historically been habituated to a system within which change is rare and most individuals choose to remain within the realm of the familiar, thus buttressing and perpetuating a ubiquitous belief in *accurate knowledge* and *indisputable truths* (Jamjoom, 2010, p. 548). [Italics in original]. Walker concurs, saying:

Another feature of Arab students that would puzzle an educator working from a Western worldview is their conformist and dependent behaviour. In Western society where independence is highly regarded dependence is likewise interpreted as immaturity. In a society that does not encourage individual independence and where conditions support conformism, conformity and dependency are natural results (Walker, 2004, p. 437).

This description does not allow for multiple views afforded by the cultural agency of any particular learner or group of learners.

## **Reflection**

An important element in learning is the relationship between teacher and learner, and within this is the status of the teacher as perceived by the learner. Insofar as the teacher acknowledges the cultural capital each brings to the context, a positive and effective environment that fosters learning may be established and maintained. Accordingly, the literature challenges teachers to find culturally inclusive ways of teaching. The question arises regarding what ways a teacher may reflect on their attitudes and expectations, and respond to learner needs within the demands of the curriculum.

## **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Gay (2000) discusses the notion of culturally responsive teaching as a way of developing a more culturally anchored way of operating within classrooms. In this section I first explain culturally relevant teaching (Ladson & Billings, 1992) and then use Gay's (2000) four foundations of culturally responsive teaching to explore ideas about ways of teaching that could integrate the ideas (discussed above) about culture and understandings about Arab culture and learning. The aim of this section is to seek insights into the kinds of questions and ideas that could be reflected in the data generated in my discussions with the SATs.

I was aware, before starting this investigation, that the design of the curriculum is a key element in the learning experience. Since the learning outcomes are embodied in the design of a course, the ongoing and important dilemma for a teacher educator is how to adapt curriculum content. It was clear also that, as King, Hollins & Haynan indicate, teaching for both understanding and teaching for diversity require, of the teacher, a “much more complex set of knowledge, skills and dispositions” (1997, p. x) than forms of teaching which do not recognise cultural diversity in the classroom. My reading of the literature discussed in this chapter has opened up fresh questions about what might be useful ways that take advantage of the learners’ cultural backgrounds in a deliberate way, within the constraints of the prepared curriculum.

Culturally *relevant* teaching is a pedagogy of opposition which, like critical pedagogy, fosters a critical understanding of power. Culturally relevant teaching is specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment (Ladson-Billings, 1992). For Ladson-Billings, culturally relevant teaching rests on three criteria or propositions: students must experience academic success; students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (1995, p. 160).

This approach is consistent with Pratt’s (2001) ‘social reform’ perspective, in which the object of teaching is the collective rather than the individual (D. Pratt & Collins, 2001). Five premises that describe culturally relevant teaching are

- students are treated as competent they are likely to demonstrate competence;
- when teachers provide instructional ‘scaffolding’, students can move from what they know to what they need to know;
- the focus of the classroom must be instructional;
- real education is about extending students’ thinking and abilities; and
- effective teaching involves in-depth knowledge of both the students and the subject matter (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 123-124).

Culturally relevant teaching is said to awaken students to values and ideologies that are embedded within texts and common practices within their disciplines; they challenge the status quo and encourage students to consider how learners are positioned and constructed in particular discourses and practices.

Culturally *responsive* teaching (Gay, 2000) embraces, and then extends on Ladson-Billing’s five premises of culturally relevant teaching by going beyond the individual learner and groups of

learners and considering the roles of the teacher. Gay (ibid) identified four pillars of culturally responsive teaching :

- teacher attitudes and expectations;
- cultural communication in the classroom;
- culturally diverse content in the curriculum; and
- culturally congruent instructional strategies (Gay, 2000, p. 44).

The discussion in the remainder of this section is based on these four pillars.

### ***Teacher attitudes and expectations***

Teacher expectations significantly influence the quality of learning opportunities provided to students, and at times teacher expectations about students may be affected by factors that have no basis in fact and may persist even in the face of contrary evidence (Gay, 2010, p. 63). Teachers' attitudes and expectations towards their learners are influenced by how well they are informed by explicit knowledge about cultural diversity, which is imperative when meeting the educational needs of ethnically diverse students (Gay, 2002). The knowledge that teachers need to have about cultural diversity goes beyond mere awareness of, respect for, and general recognition of the fact that ethnic groups have different values or express similar values in various ways. In an American context, a study by Wigfield, Galper, Denton and Seefeldt (1999) had expected to find differences in teacher perceptions by social class, but instead found differences related to ethnicity. That is, teachers' expectations for white students were considerably more positive than for African-American students; teachers rated African-American children lower on the academic scales. They also rated the ability of these students to make friends and their own enjoyment in working with them lower than their ratings for white students. Similarly, in New Zealand Rubie-Davis, Hattie and Hamilton (2006) set out to compare teachers' expectations and student achievement between a predominantly white group and the three other minority groups: Māori, Pacific Island and Asian. This study also showed that ethnicity may be a factor in teachers' expectations independent of social class and student achievement. Teachers had expectations for Māori students' achievement in reading that were below their expectations for other ethnic groups. This was despite the finding that Māori students' performance was not below that of any other ethnic group at the beginning of the year. This was not true for Pacific Island students, for whom teachers had higher expectations for their achievement (Ennis, 1998; Good & Weinstein, 1986; Rubie-Davies et al., 2006, pp. 430-431; Solomon, Battistich, & Hom, 1996).

In New Zealand, the below average academic performance of Māori and Pacific Island students has been well documented (Hattie, 2003; Wagemaker, 1993). Yet, Rubie-Davis, et al

(2006) are clear that while cause and effect cannot be determined in their study, it is possible that differing expectations could result from such stereotyping. There is evidence that when this occurs teachers may alter their teaching practices and thus student opportunity to learn (Ennis, 1995, 1998; Good & Weinstein, 1986; Solomon et al., 1996). Rubie-Davis, et al. (2006) point out that their study has several implications for practising teachers and teacher educators, saying “although teacher expectation research has been carried out for almost 50 years, the ways in which teacher expectations can significantly influence student opportunity to learn should be stressed” (Rubie-Davies et al., 2006, p. 442). Diamond and Moore include teachers’ positive attitudes and expectations of how students will perform in school amongst their definition of multicultural literacy, which emerges from theoretical principles about culture, literacy, and learning. These teacher attitudes and expectations have a marked effect on students’ ability to achieve success (Diamond & Moore, 1995, pp. 6-7). Because culture strongly influences the attitudes, values, and behaviors that students and teachers bring to the instructional process, it has to likewise be a major determinant of how the problems of underachievement are solved (Gay, 2002, pp. , p. 115).

The literature discussed above generally refers to settings where cultural differences occur within an established group rather than, as in the case of the visiting SATs, where both the teachers in their homeland institutions (and their students) form a largely homogenous cohort with a generally shared culture and religion. I have been unable to find any literature that refers to teacher expectations in such a situation.

The notion of ‘deficit thinking’ provides another way of exploring low achievement among students from cultures that differ from a teacher’s culture or the dominant culture. Teachers may approach their work concentrating on what students do not have, rather than focusing on what students actually bring to the learning environment (their assets). In such cases teachers have a narrow conception of what it means to be successful; and these views are based on their own cultural references that may be inconsistent with others (Moule, 2012, p. 116). Cultural ways that differ from the practices of dominant groups are judged to be less adequate without examining them from the perspective of the community's participants (Cole & Bruner, 1971; Hilliard & Vaughn-Scott, 1982; McShane & Berry, 1986; Stoddart, 1998). Deficit thinking is likely to occur where teachers do not understand, or respect, or value learning about cultural difference. As a consequence they spend their time remediating students instead of building on the knowledge students bring into the classroom (Moule, 2012).

Walker notes that the fluidity of education across cultural boundaries provides the context for teachers “to understand their own world-view and its impact on their practice” (2004, p. 433). One example is a situated view, such as Gutierrez and Rogoff’s (2003) *cultural styles* approach, which arose from efforts by these researchers’ attempts to leave behind deficit-model thinking and led to a more situated and dynamic view of the cultural practice of ethnic and racial groups. Instead of ‘essentialising’ people on the basis of a group label they underlined the variability that exists within groups and their practices (Irvine & York, 1995; S. Nieto, 1996). This deficit approach, like many of the early culture shock theorists, implies that any ‘problem’ is the student’s, that it is the role of academics and language support staff to ‘correct’ the problem and that it is the student’s responsibility to ‘adjust’ (McLean & Ransom, 2005, p. 45). Instead, Diamond and Moore offer a perspective that embodies a philosophy “that *all* students can learn. *Difference* in cultural/ethnic and linguistic backgrounds does not equal *deficiency*” (Diamond & Moore, 1995, p. 5, italics in original).

Celebrating cultural diversity may be considered as a way of countering deficit thinking. It will be expressed by developing a cultural competence, which entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awarenesses and sensitivities, learning specific bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching (Moule, 2012). “Only by gaining the requisite awarenesses, knowledge and skills necessary to become culturally competent can teachers hope to actualise their professional commitment to ensure academic success for all students” (Moule, 2012, p. 6).

### ***Cultural communication in the classroom***

Cultural communication is the tool of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010, p. 175). Communication cannot exist without culture, culture cannot be known without communication, and teaching and learning are more effective for ethnically diverse students when classroom communication is culturally responsive (Gay, 2010, p. 76). If students are not very proficient in school communication, and teachers do not understand or accept their cultural communication styles, then their academic performance may be evaluated or trapped in communicative mismatches. Students may know much more than they are able to communicate, or they may be communicating much more than their teachers are able to discern, so teachers need to be aware of the potential for culturally-based misunderstanding in the learning environment.

Cortazzi and Jin (1997) presents a model which links language skills, inter-cultural skills and study skills. Figure 1 shows the model which was developed in a teaching situation where the focus was on teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP). They conceptualise cultural

influences in terms of academic cultures, which refers to the cultural norms and expectations involved in academic activity; cultures of communication, which are expected ways of communicating and of interpreting others' communication in a cultural group; and cultures of learning, which include cultural beliefs and values about teaching and learning, expectations about classroom behaviour and "what constitutes 'good' work" (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, p. 76). A key feature of the interaction between culture, communication and learning is that participants do not only carry cultural behaviour and concepts into the classroom but they also use the specific framework of their cultures to interpret and assess other peoples' words, actions, and academic performance (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, pp. 76-77).

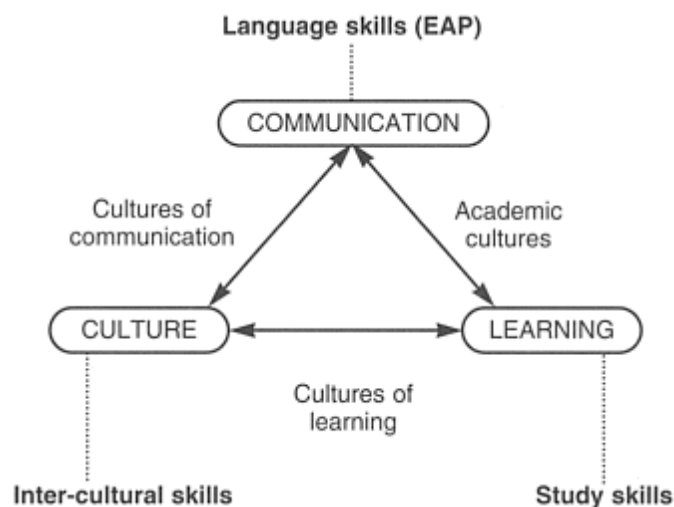


Figure 1: Cortazzi & Jin's (1997) model of cultural infusions in communication and learning.

This model is helpful because it highlights the idea that people from different cultures can make different assumptions about fundamental things like what counts as learning, what is important within an academic community, and how it is appropriate to communicate. This model suggests it could be useful to explore the *cultures of learning* (such as the philosophies and theories of learning and teaching), the *academic cultures* of the discipline being studied (in this case the practices of teaching in a tertiary institution); and the *cultures of communication* (the understandings of appropriate interpersonal interaction in the classroom, including body-language and verbal interactions). Determining what ethnically diverse students know and can do, as well as what they are capable of knowing and doing, is often a function of how well teachers can communicate with them (Gay, 2002, p. 110).

### ***Acknowledging cultural diversity in the curriculum***

Curriculum content about ethnic and cultural diversity is the resource of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010, p. 175). Knowledge in the form of curriculum content is central to

empowering ethnically diverse students through academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy. Acknowledging cultural diversity within curriculum content provides a means for students to assert and accentuate their present and future powers, capabilities, attitudes and experiences. These explanations emphasize the importance of student relevance and participation in curriculum decision making (Gay, 2010, p. 127).

Teachers need to learn how to convert knowledge of cultural diversity into culturally responsive curriculum designs and instructional strategies in three ways according to Gay (2000). These include,

- the formal plans for instruction approved by the policy and governing bodies of educational systems;
- the symbolic curriculum, which includes images, symbols, icons, mottoes, awards, celebrations, and other artifacts that are used to teach students knowledge, skills, morals, and values; and
- the societal curriculum, that is the knowledge, ideas, and impressions about ethnic groups that are portrayed in the mass media. Television programmes, newspapers, magazines, and movies are much more than mere factual information or idle entertainment (Cortés, 1995; Cortés, 2000).

Alongside mass media, other sources of curriculum content for culturally responsive teaching, which are particularly relevant to vocational tertiary teaching, include textbooks, standards, literary and trade books (Gay, 2010, p. 128).

Social relationships and political realities are at the heart of teaching and learning. Learning emerges from the social, cultural, and political spaces in which it takes place, and through the interactions and relationships that occur between learners and teachers (S. Nieto, 2010, p. 4). Amongst the thirteen wide-ranging components of multi-cultural education that Smith (1998) has culled from the literature, and which he considers essential for inclusion in teacher education, Knowledge Base Six he called 'culturally responsive curriculum development'. Inherent in this view is the notion that culture does not function in a social vacuum, but rather "as a system that is characterized by social stratification and tensions" (Freire, 1972; Friere & Macedo, 1987, p. 29). Merriam claims a key to understanding this Western/non-Western dichotomy is the concept of knowledge, in which the domination of Western thought is sustained through 'scientific' research, so that "colonization of the world is now intellectual and conceptual"

(Freire, 1972; 2007, p. 4). We might ask what counts as legitimate knowledge, who constructs this knowledge about whom, and how is this knowledge transmitted?

Acknowledging the cultural diversity within the curriculum provides a further opportunity to practise culturally responsive teaching, and can provide a means of bringing to the fore areas of difference and areas in common between the participants. The challenge lies in finding a curriculum which ensures the coursework offered meets the needs of the learners for the successful completion of a course of study and perhaps a qualification, as well as the credentialing objectives of the institution. What constitutes programme content is, for the most part, directly related to the forms of knowledge and content recognized as legitimate and necessary by those who make curriculum decisions. These decisions strongly embody the values, attitudes, and biases inherent in the educational discourse of those who design and ultimately approve curriculum (Darder, 1991, p. 19). Merriam claims that “the tyranny of western science precludes the ability to hear, see or feel other possibilities or to readily accommodate change within its systems” (Merriam, 2007, p. 5), and points out that Hindu, Confucian, and Islamic traditions focus on holistic development though toward somewhat different ends, which means a *lifelong* journey from birth to death. The ongoing and important challenge for teacher educators is how to take advantage of learners’ cultural backgrounds while respecting and adhering to the constraints of the prepared curriculum of learning and teaching by employing culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000) in deliberate ways.

### ***Culturally congruent instructional strategies***

Establishing congruity between different aspects of the learning processes of ethnically diverse students and the strategies of instruction used by classroom teachers is essential to improving their academic achievement (Gay, 2010, p. 176). Diamond and Moore (1995) identified three different roles for teachers in their research into a multicultural literacy programme in Michigan in 1989. They suggest that teachers' roles become more challenging as they become *cultural organisers, cultural mediators, and orchestrators of social contexts*.

### ***Teachers as cultural organizers.***

Teachers act as cultural organisers when they facilitate strategic ways of accomplishing tasks, so that the learning process involves varied ways of knowing, experiencing, thinking, and behaving (Diamond & Moore, 1995). I take this to mean that teachers provide activities and learning strategies that enable participation from all cultures. Teachers who have traditionally taught students of one culture can struggle to find ways to support students from a different one.



One way may involve what Darder calls cross-cultural dialogues by which students come to better recognise for themselves the manner in which language works to define who they are, and how language as a tool can assist them to explore critically those possibilities “that have remained hidden and out of their reach” (1991, pp. 103-104).

Storytelling could be one such strategy. The literature suggests storytelling as a means of drawing out the inherent issues, perspectives and cultural capital of a group of learners (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Clandinin, 1993; Friend, 2000; C. Lauritzen & M. Jaeger, 1997; Livo & Rietz, 1986; Mattingly, 1991; McDrury & Alterio, 2003; McEwan & Egan, 1995). A teacher who is developing culturally inclusive instructional strategies could begin by planning activities using storytelling. Ours is a world of stories (Moule, 2012, p. 2). Storytelling can transcend time, unite people with the past, the future, one another, common experiences, and can help people make sense of life, their own experiences and the experiences of other people (McDrury & Alterio, 2003, p. 9). Baskerville (2011, p. 108) suggests storytelling has “a central role to play in work on cultural difference and diversity” and to create or extend understandings about themselves, others and cultural perspectives. In line with constructivist theories Lauritzen and Jaeger (1997) argue for the use of narrative pedagogy as a practice for co-constructing curriculum. Reflective learning and the ability to bring about thoughtful and reasoned change to practice is more likely to occur when tellers and listeners work collaboratively in formal contexts to “construct knowledge using processes which promote reflective dialogue” (McDrury & Alterio, 2003, p. 59).

There are challenges for the teacher in using story in a purposeful way. Clough points out that narrative is useful only to the extent that it opens up to its audiences a deeper view of life in familiar contexts: it can make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar, as can happen when reporting research. Similarly, in educational contexts, stories can provide “a means by which those truths, which cannot be otherwise told, are uncovered” (Clough, 2002, p. 8). Bruner (1996) claims that narratives or stories are the means through which people make sense of their encounters, their experiences, their human affairs. We frame the accounts of our cultural origins and our most cherished beliefs in story form, and it is not just the content of these stories that grip us, but their narrative artifice. We represent our lives (to ourselves as well as to others) in the form of narrative, so that the whats and whys of narratives are never chance occurrences or mere happenstance (J. S. Bruner, 1996, p. 40). They have deliberate intentionality, ‘voice’, positionality, and contestability (Gay, 2000, p. 3).

It could be argued that using storytelling as a method to reveal inner thoughts and feelings would be too invasive of privacy and culturally inappropriate for some students. Any

important change in patterns of communication, expectations about the curriculum, or about the nature of learning (the three cultural domains described by Cortazzi & Jin (1997)) would need to be introduced in a way that allowed all participants to respect the activity that is being introduced. Respect is crucial to negotiating effective intercultural communication and developing competencies that transcend national boundaries (McLean & Ransom, 2005, p. 60). Storytelling is, however, one tool that teachers who are acting as cultural organisers might employ as part of developing a culturally congruent teaching strategy.

### ***Teachers as cultural mediators***

Teachers act as cultural mediators when they create opportunities for critical dialogue and expression among all students as they pursue knowledge and understanding (Diamond & Moore, 1995). This suggests that conversations about cultural differences and the assumptions of different people become a legitimate part of the curriculum. How people are expected to go about learning may differ across cultures (Villegas, 1991, p. 13). Villegas argues that cultural differences present both opportunities and challenges for teachers. Similarly, Cortazzi and Jin note that hidden assumptions about culture infuse communication and learning, therefore there is “a need for staff and students to develop inter-cultural skills, both *learning to communicate across cultures* and *communicating for learning across cultures*” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, p. 76, italics in original). Which invites the question as to how well this would play out in practice when different worldviews meet.

One area for such discussion could be about differing practices of teaching and learning. Across the Tasman Sea a comparable context provides evidence of how Western learning methods are perceived by Arab students. Shen Chen and Hung Wa Sit (2009) interviewed 20 international students at the University of Newcastle, half from South-east Asia and half from the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Iran and Kuwait). They asked about their perspectives towards the major teaching strategies commonly used in Australian universities (Killen, 2007), in contrast with those of their home countries, and how well the participants adjusted academically in a new cultural environment of learning. They found that in terms of adjustment to the new teaching strategies, there is an issue of cultural conflict “due to the students’ cultural values from their home countries” (Chen & Sit, 2009, p. 500). They identified seven teaching strategies that can be broadly categorized into two contrasting approaches: a teacher-centred approach and a learner-centred approach. The responses from all interviewees across both cultural groups showed that it was necessary and effective to learn by using a teacher-centred approach such as Direct Instruction. The most important reason was that this strategy was commonly used in their home

countries; hence they had never questioned the value of Direct Instruction. On the other hand, the participants had mixed views regarding the more learner-centred approaches. Generally speaking, all interviewees found strategies such as Group Work and Cooperative Learning helpful, especially when doing assignments. However, the strategy of Problem Solving was not as popular as the others. This finding indicates that the roles the participants played previously in the classrooms of their home countries had been challenged, and changing roles in the new learning environment created a problem for them. Unlike their South-east Asian peers, the Middle Eastern students demonstrated a positive response towards Discussion, but gave very low scores for Performance Activities. They found it difficult to adjust to this unfamiliar teaching strategy because 'of their pre-existing cultural values (Chen & Sit, 2009, p. 501).

In contrast to the Chen and Sit (2009) findings, Kramsch (1993) criticised the dichotomy of either a 'teacher-centered approach' or a 'student-centered approach' because it can be misleading in terms of teachers' and students' roles. Instead, a learning-centered approach' may be a more acceptable notion, because both teachers and students focus on the learning process and aim to achieve the best learning outcome. Kramsch's approach (1993) replaced the traditional view of 'adjustment' by international students with a new notion of 'the third place', which refers to a state of change in cultural value through interacting with new cultures.

As cultural mediators who maximize learning opportunities (Diamond & Moore, 1995), teachers must gain knowledge of the cultures represented in their classrooms, then translate this knowledge into instructional practice.

### ***Teachers as orchestrators of social contexts***

Teachers act as orchestrators of social contexts when they provide a range of learning configurations that include interpersonal and intrapersonal opportunities for seeking, accessing, and evaluating knowledge (Diamond & Moore, 1995). This suggests that the very structure of the classroom and the way it operates is affected by the learning that occurs as participants orchestrate (or bring together in some harmonious way) the social context in which they are learning. People are both working together (interpersonally) and individually (intrapersonally, exploring and adjusting their understandings within the context of the class room). Finding ways to foster social contact would complement the four interrelated factors Baskerville identified as key to developing a culturally inclusive classroom, namely, i) developing the ways of working, ii) establishing a caring supportive learning environment, iii) privileging participant student voice through personal stories, and iv) enhancing participant connectedness and relationship change (Baskerville, 2011). Of course the student-student relationship is a key element in these factors,

but in addition some research outcomes emphasize the importance of positive personal relationships between teachers and students in classrooms (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1992). How the learner views their teacher will influence greatly the social interactions for learners, not only with their teacher but also with other learners. "Teaching is an act of social interaction and the resulting classroom climate is related directly to the interpersonal relationship between student and teacher" (Irvine & York, 1995, p. 494).

Whether in formal classroom settings or informal contacts, teaching offers the opportunity to provide support for learners' cultural development in various ways, such as intellectual, social, and ethnic (Gay, 2010, p. 216). One approach to the role of teachers as orchestrators of social contexts may be a kaupapa Māori view about supporting students holistically, as described in te whare tapa wha (Durie, 1985, 1994). This brings together the physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions of health and healing and provides an insight into ways to provide pastoral support in educational settings. Similarly, the tuakana-teina approach allows teachers a means to establish practical ways to improve learning in culturally valid ways. Tuakana-teina refers to the relationship between an older (tuakana) person and a younger (teina) person, and is specific to teaching and learning in the context of Māori. This can take a variety of forms, including peer-to-peer: teina teaches teina, tuakana teaches tuakana; younger to older: the teina has some skills in an area that the tuakana does not and is able to teach the tuakana; older to younger: the tuakana has the knowledge and content to pass on to the teina; able to less able: the learner may not be as able in an area, and someone more skilled can teach what is required (Ministry of Education, 2012). In such Māori models may lie ways to explore how the role of the teacher can include becoming cultural organisers, cultural mediators, and orchestrators of social contexts.

Students and their teachers are influenced by the cultural capital each brings to the learning process from their own society. Whilst immersed in the experience of learning in a foreign environment, the international student can identify many of the differences and commonalities between their own and the host country's cultures. Culture is learned and always changing. While they may not become assimilated into the new cultural and education context, international students are not likely to preserve their distinctive elements indefinitely. Faced with an alien, unfamiliar experience of how fellow humans behave, and different world-views of education and processes for making meaning, a new cultural dynamic emerges, along with associated tensions.

## **Reflections**

This thesis explores the experiences and perceptions of a group of SATs who attended CPIT in 2009. In line with the idea from grounded theory (Cresswell, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) the empirical work within this thesis largely was carried out prior to writing this literature review. This approach has enabled me to avoid accidental or intentional biases informed by the literature, when investigating the raw data and searching for emergent themes. Alongside the influence of culture on the learning context, the experience of an international student is also influenced by the curriculum with which they engage. The assumptions that drive the curriculum and the teaching are addressed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 3 – Vocational tertiary teacher in-service professional development**

In this chapter I call on some of the literature related to tertiary teacher education generally in New Zealand and the scholarship of teaching and learning in order to identify some of the assumptions the New Zealand teacher educators (NZTs) bring to the curriculum design and delivery of the planned programme for Saudi Arabian teachers (SATs). The chapter ends with a discussion of some possible mismatches between the expectations of the NZTs and the SATs.

### **Curriculum for ISTE**

The many stakeholders in a course of study, such as the qualifying authority, the institution accredited to provide the course, those with vested political and economic interests, as well as the learner and the teacher, all bring assumptions about the curriculum. The short course descriptors issued to the SATs before their arrival in New Zealand says that the Adult Education segment of their ISTE will develop skills in principles and practices in technical education, assessment, delivery and course design in Adult Education contexts (Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, 2009). However, the curriculum of a typical ISTE course in New Zealand teachers differs, at least in part, from these objectives. They include assumptions based on Western educational models and the experience of educational developers, which may not meet the needs of SATs.

The curriculum developed for SATs assumes that teachers, whether from New Zealand or Saudi Arabia, will benefit from ISTE to build up core knowledge of theoretical perspectives that explain learners and learning, and practical skills to support learners. Teaching is complex, so short courses of ISTE would ideally model best, current practice in teaching, learning, curriculum design, and support teachers to develop responsive approaches to new initiatives and develop practical skills they can take away to their own learning contexts. The scholarship of teaching and learning is growing and so are the learning theories that inform a curriculum of teacher education, therefore any short course will only have time to expose participants to a small view of them.

For tertiary teachers in the vocational sector teaching is a second professional identity. Typically, teachers are likely to come to the education profession as fully mature experts in a craft

area, having enjoyed success in an industry where they have developed a strong occupational identity. On becoming a teacher they develop a new dual identity as an educator. This happens in stages from *becoming* to *being* a teacher, that is, from a peripheral engagement to eventually *belonging* to a teaching community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Teaching communities contain individuals who, through the pursuit of a jointly defined enterprise, have developed shared practices, historical and social resources, and common perspectives (Stein & Coburn, 2005, p. 17).

In some cases new vocational teachers resist formal education in teaching and learning, preferring to focus on retaining their connections with the industry from which they have emerged and they prefer to continue up-skilling in the discipline area in which they excel. In some subjects, such as computing science, participants on ISTE have prior experience of higher learning, with a degree in computing studies as well as industrial experience. Others who are new to teaching engage enthusiastically in the scholarship and practice of learning and teaching. However, many teachers in vocational education find the demands of a course in teaching and learning challenging academically, especially if they had not experienced success as learners themselves. Studying theoretical perceptions of learners and learning is more difficult for those who have English as a second language.

Ako Aotearoa, which is the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, provides a stocktake for the provision of education, training and support for new tertiary teachers in New Zealand tertiary institutions (Ako Aotearoa, 2010). The stocktake identifies fifteen underlying philosophical statements commonly utilised in graduate profiles and outcome statements in active qualifications for adult education. For SATs who seek upskilling in a short course of ISTE the curriculum needs to be designed to create optimum value for the limited time available. To that end the curriculum could include some of the skills identified in the stocktake, such as delivery skills, theoretical teaching framework, professional practice, assessment, programme design, and e-learning. The curriculum could overlook other elements identified in the stocktake, namely Māori teaching pedagogy, the New Zealand educational context, research skills, Māori learners, quality enhancement, diverse learners, advanced professional skills, ethics, literacy and numeracy.

An ISTE curriculum could also include some aspects that the American National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) prescribes as a conceptual framework for teacher education in the compulsory school sector. Firstly, it will include candidate knowledge, skills and dispositions about content, pedagogical and professional knowledge to help all students learn; and secondly, diversity in curriculum experiences to encourage understanding and appreciation of

ethnic, racial, gender, language and religious differences (National Council for Accreditation of Teachers, 2002).

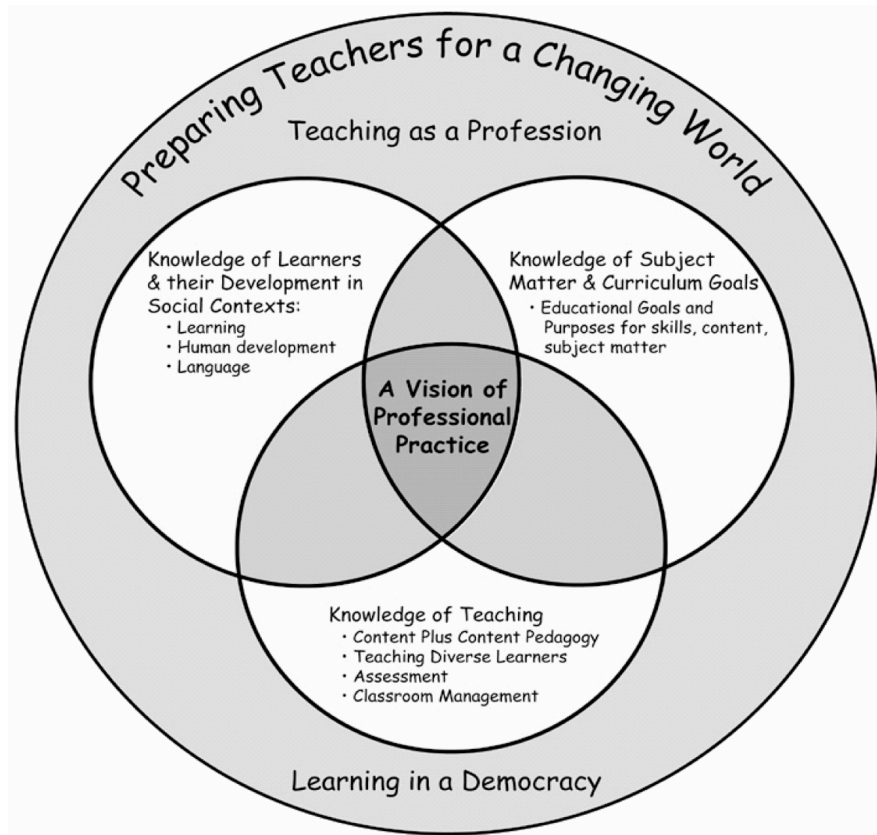


Figure 2: A Framework for Understanding Teaching and Learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) propose a conceptual framework that can help people organise the vast amounts of information relevant to teaching and learning for preparing teachers for a changing world (Figure 2). It highlights three general areas of knowledge, skills and dispositions that are important for an teacher to acquire (p. 11). They include, knowledge of learners and how they learn and develop within social contexts; conceptions of curriculum content and goals; and an understanding of teaching in light of the content and learners to be taught, as informed by assessment and supported by classroom environments. At the heart of the framework is a vision of professional practice. Of the two outside conditions of practice which frame these interactions between teaching, learners and subject, one may be applied to international SATs – teaching as a profession (top of figure), while the other – learning in a democracy (bottom of figure), may not apply to teachers from non-democratic states, such as Saudi Arabia. This framework illustrates the significant scale of the demands on SATs and invites



the question what is realistic in a short ISTE for SATs with English as a second language and different pedagogical and cultural worldviews.

### **Practical teaching methods versus theory**

SATs, desperate to survive in the classroom and unsure how to support engagement by their learners, may ask to learn about what they often call ‘activities’ to employ with their learners. This ‘tips and tricks’ approach to teaching may help address some issues a teacher encounters, however the NZTs believe that, without a solid theoretical underpinning of the pedagogy of adult learners and learning teachers may be found wanting at the chalk-face. There is no one-size-fits-all in learning and teaching because of the variability of the contexts where learning occurs. Therefore, instead of just prescribing techniques or activities to use in the classroom, NZTs see more value in introducing their novice teachers to what Darder calls the *language of theory*. Although it is a language generally connected with the realm of abstract thinking, its fundamental function of praxis cannot be fulfilled unless it is linked to the concrete experiences and practices of everyday life (Darder, 1991, p. 104). NZTs believe that, as the saying goes, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory” (Lewin, 1951). It is important to identify which teaching strategies will be most pertinent to help a learner achieve the overall graduate profile, and the particular learning outcomes, for a given topic or discipline and learning context.

Introducing theoretical perspectives to explain learners and learning can influence the ways teachers think about how they themselves learn, then how to support their own learners. Viskovic suggests that there has been little discussion of how teachers’ conceptions of learning and teaching or attitudes or practices have developed (Viskovic, 2009). Referring specifically to tertiary teacher development in New Zealand (Viskovic, 2006) she says that several writers had observed that teachers appeared to rely mainly on tacit experiential knowledge and did not have a strong theory-based understanding of their own teaching (Murray & Macdonald, 1997). This invites a question about which principles ought to be included in a curriculum of ISTE for SATs.

### **Key theoretical perspectives to explain learners and learning**

Pratt (2005) says a discussion of *learners* and *learning* should be an essential part of any philosophy of teaching and a hallmark of ISTE. A teaching curriculum is likely to be informed by the phenomenon of *learning* in psychological, sociological, and pedagogic terms as a way to understand themselves and their students as learners. The nature of human learning, concepts of learning, understanding the constructive nature of knowing (Piaget, 1952) and metacognition

(knowledge about one's own cognitive processes) may be helpful for a SAT to make sense of the processes they and their own learners go through when learning.

Theoretical perspectives of ways of knowing may be used to explain *learning*. These might include,

- Behaviourism, which emphasises the role of positive and negative feedback in helping organisms to learn and perform complex skills (Thorndike, 1931/1968; Watson, 1931, 1967);
- Constructivism, which arises from research that has shown how individuals process and understand information, correctly or incorrectly, in light of their experiences and prior knowledge and beliefs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2012; Piaget, 1952; Schwartz, Bransford, & Sears, 1998); and
- social learning theory, which suggests that much learning occurs through observation and imitation of models and that it can be maintained through reinforcement (Bandura, 1977, 1997; J. S. Bruner, 1996; J. S. Bruner, 2006).

Vygotsky's social development theory may apply, based on the ideas that human learning is dependent on the learner's interaction with his or her social and cultural environment, that learners are active participants in their own learning, and that learning is about turning other people's ideas into their own personalised structure of knowledge (Biggs, 1993, 2003; Biggs & Tang, 2007; Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Ramsden, 1992; Vygotsky, Rieber, Robinson, & Bruner, 2004). These concepts would increase SAT's knowledge of learning, a basic element in developing teaching practice.

Perspectives of *learners* might incorporate the ideas of humanistic psychologists (Maslow, 1998; Rogers, 1951) as alternatives to a behaviourist approach, with concepts such as self-fulfilment, actualisation, the importance of subjective experience, that people act with intentionality and values (Freire, 1972; Huitt, 2009). Teaching adult learners may be helped by exploring Knowles' (1980) ideas about *andragogy*, as an alternative to childhood developmental pedagogy, its perception of reality and causality (Piaget, 1929). Understanding such concepts may help a teacher to make sense of learner behaviours and responses, such as boredom issues.

A curriculum of ISTE could include exposure to the internal higher-order information processing learning theory contained within cognitive psychology, including the processes in the mind/brain, thinking skills, reasoning, remembering, and language skills. Teaching students whose

cognitive competencies differ from those of the teacher requires a different didactic approach (McLean & Ransom, 2005, p. 48). Design for learning coming from a cognitive pedagogical perspective could include Gagne's (1985) nine events that are a systematic and sequential organizational process for learning. Models that promote active learning and reflection may apply, such as Piaget's (1969) model of cognitive development, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, and Race's 'ripples in a pond' (2010) arise from the notion that learning requires certain actions on the part of the learner. Some educational psychologists affirm active learning as an alternative to the common transmission style of teaching, because "... it takes more than a transmission model to change the conceptual structures that people invent for themselves" (Lauritsen & Jaeger, 1997). Diamond and Moore's definition of multicultural literacy emerges from theoretical principles about culture, literacy, and learning, one of which states that "students learn best when they take an active role in the acquisition of knowledge and skills" (1995, pp. 6-7). The use of active learning methods is more likely to result in 'deep' versus 'surface' learning (Marton & Säljö, 1976) leading to 'rich learning experiences' in which coherent learning activities involve three strategies; providing learners information/ideas, ensuring an experience that engages with the content, and reflective dialogue (Fink, 2003).

Reflection is an important element in learning and effective teaching practice, for its potential to propel us into further thought and action. Reflective practice may be a core element of ISTE for SATs both to learn about theoretically as an aid for their own learners, and to practice themselves as a way of developing as a teaching professional (Hatton & Smith, 1992; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1986; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1992; Schön, 1991). In fact, according to Darder, all human activity consists of action and reflection, or praxis, suggesting "all human activity requires theory to illuminate it" (1991, p. 83). McDrury and Alterio affirm that, as an interactive, social process, reflection cannot be understood without reference to action or context (2003, p. 24). An ISTE curriculum may assume, therefore, that building up the ability to become a reflective teaching practitioner will support ongoing development after the course.

As part of the exploration of learning a SAT who prepares learners for industry placement could discuss Billet's notions of situated learning or learning in the workplace (Billet, 1994) and Wenger's description of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1990; Wenger, 1998a). This would suggest expertise is relational to a particular workplace or community of practice; is embedded in social practice over time; requires competence in the community's discourse, activities and ways of behaving; is reciprocal, as people shape and are shaped by the community of practice; and requires pertinence, that is, knowing what behaviours are acceptable (Billett,

2001, pp. 64-65). To complement these ideas Rogoff's (2008) description of participatory appropriation, which views development as a dynamic, active, mutual process involved in peoples' participation in cultural activities (2008, p. 67) could be considered. These issues can be applied not only to Sat's own learners, but also to themselves as developing professional teachers.

Teachers may have concerns about student behaviour and ways to manage it, and support engagement in their learning, which can form part of the ISTE curriculum. Race and Pickford (2007) argue that making teaching work is about ensuring students are satisfied with their learning experience, and this satisfaction in turn plays its part in enhancing the quality of their learning. They identify a number of factors from the UK National Student Survey of English and Scottish students which they had reported as helping them "to feel that teaching has indeed worked for them" (Race & Pickford, 2007, p. 133). The factors include, teachers being good at explaining things, making the subject interesting, being enthusiastic about what is being taught; a course that is intellectually stimulating; assessment and feedback that has clear criteria, is fair, prompt, comes with detailed comments, and clarifies things not understood; academic support, good organisation and management, learning resources, such as IT, equipment and library. They also include personal development for students as a result of their broad experience during the various elements making up their course, for example, communication skills, and being able to tackle unfamiliar problems (Race & Pickford, 2007, p. 147). These factors provide a challenge to the teacher educator, who is expected to model them.

Finally, apart from the primarily Western pedagogical models identified here, Maori concepts of learning may help SATs to build up their teaching skills and understanding of learners and learning, for example, Poutama; Tuakana / Teina and Te Whare Tapa Wha. The scholarship of teaching and learning is a varied and growing discipline and some of the theoretical perspectives above would inform the ISTE curriculum for SATs.

### **The teacher's philosophy of teaching**

Alongside exploring theoretical perspectives that help us understand the learner and learning the literature refers to the need to foster the teacher's own identity and philosophical approach to teaching and learning through ISTE. Each teacher has their own understanding of their role in the learning process, which may be captured by Walker's term *world-view*. This suggests something that is embedded in the person, it provides the window through which people view the world in which they are living and with which they interact. Teachers meeting

cultures different to their own can be largely unaware that they bring with them an embedded and largely unchallenged view of how things are, and “such views have shaped their educational practice, and have provided a basis on which they have based assumptions about, among other things, learners, learning, teachers, schooling and teaching” (Walker, 2004, p. 433). Assisting the SAT to identify their predispositions, and the values and beliefs that have helped form their worldview, may help them to recognise ways they prefer to teach, consider alternative ways, and foster a respect for worldviews that differ from their own. There is a profound connection between identity and practice, which are “mirror images of each other” (Wenger, 1998b, p. 105). Pratt (2005) explains that a philosophy of teaching statement should reveal the deeper structures and values that give both meaning and justification to an approach to teaching. These values will be influenced by many things, from their own experience as a learner and as an educator, to the mentoring and guidance they receive as developing professional teachers.

A teaching philosophy is at once highly personal and also communal, particularly because of the influence of the particular discipline or profession being taught. The NZT’s role of helping SATs develop into professional teachers may be captured by Rogoff’s (2008) three planes - *participatory appropriation*, *guided participation*, and *apprenticeship* – where the idea of apprenticeship necessarily focuses attention on the specific nature of the activity involved, as well as on its relation to the practices and institutions of the community in which it occurs; economic, political, spiritual, and material (p. 60). “This is a process of becoming, rather than acquisition” (Rogoff, 2008, p. 60). It is in contrast to an *internalisation* perspective, which views development in terms of a static, bounded acquisition or transmission of pieces of knowledge (Rogoff, 2008, p. 67). Pratt (2005) notes that there can be serious divisions of thought about what is to be learned and the central role and responsibility of a teacher in the process.

Teacher educators play a pivotal role of in assisting teachers to improve outcomes for students. A Ministry of Education report on teacher professional learning and development best evidence synthesis iteration, concludes that little attention has been paid to developing the knowledge and skills teacher educators require for working with teachers in ways that have positive outcomes for students (Timperley, Wilson, Barrer, & Fung, 2007). There is a ‘black box’ in the influential relationships between the work of teacher educators, teachers, and students, between acts of teaching and what students learn. Timperley, et al. describe how these assumptions form a “chain of Influence” (2007, p. xiv), although there is no direct relationship between teaching inputs and what students learn, because how students interpret and utilise the available information determines what they learn (2007, p. 7). A second ‘black box’ is situated

between professional learning opportunities, such as those undertaken during ISTE, and their impact on teaching practice. Little is known about how teachers interpret the understandings and utilise the particular skills made available through professional learning opportunities, and about the consequent impact on teaching practice, except that “the relationship is far from simple” (ibid). Wenglinsky (2002) concluded that in the relationships between teachers’ training, teaching practices, and student achievement, teachers’ preparation in content and pedagogy appeared to be associated with teaching practices, which in turn influence achievement. However indirect the downstream effect on student achievement, the teacher educator’s role is valuable in helping teachers, not only through the many facets of the inter-relationship between any teacher and learner, but also dealing with the complexity of areas identified in Figure 2 (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) that comprise the task of preparing teachers for a changing world.

### **Context in which the learning takes place**

The situational factors which all educators face within a course of study involve a myriad issues that affect the learning context. Tensions can arise from constraints, prescribed learning outcomes, the demands of the particular discipline, the characteristics and needs of the learners, the past experiences and associated ‘baggage’ that learners bring with them, time and assessment constraints, stakeholder expectations and influences, and evaluations of the teacher and their programme of study, to name a few. Each of these issues will not be explored here, but rather those additional cultural factors which apply to SATs which may create tension during their ISTE, such as the cultural contexts affecting international learners, Eastern animosity towards the West, and Islamic models of teaching. In a sense, all learning is culturally mediated, that is, it arises from cultural activity (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 33).

Recognising the prior experience and the contexts of the learner may help learning, particularly in cultural terms. In many cases matching the contextual conditions for learning to the cultural experiences of the learner increases task engagement and hence increases task performance (Allen & Butler, 1996, p. 317). Best practice in teaching in a diverse classroom means taking the time to explore what skills and experiences our international cohort brings, and what expectations they have of teachers (McLean P & Ransom, 2005, p. 46). Ryan (2005) sees value in an approach that goes beyond conceptual theorising and goes outside established boundaries, both mental and physical. Field work and field placements provide opportunities for students to expand their perspectives, especially in areas where lecturers themselves have little knowledge or experience, especially in practice-based courses (Ryan, 2005, pp. 94-95). Similarly, Rogoff (2008) suggests that the teacher must create opportunities for learners to experience alternative

explanations and to voice exceptions, if stereotypes or simplistic explanations are to be changed. It may be that, as Ryan puts it, the process of creating intervening experiences for learners is the task of the curriculum and the teacher (Ryan, 2005, pp. 66).

As the facilitator and most powerful person in the learning environment, teachers are responsible for creating a culture, perhaps a 'third space', in the classroom (or learning environment) and inviting students to co-participate in this effort. Apart from planning activities for learners to engage with the curriculum and providing resources to assist the learning, a teacher's role is to provide feedback, question, challenge and help learners through the threshold to new knowledge (Meyer & Land, 2005). However, to support learning for students, learning needs to be "compatible with and emerge from their culture, their traditions, and their heritage" (Diamond & Moore, 1995, p. 8). Gay says culturally responsive teaching "... is about *teaching*, and the teaching of concern is that which *centers* classroom instruction in *multiethnic cultural frames of reference*" (Gay, 2000, p. xix, italics in original). Eliciting the views of international learners and attempting to understand the context of their learning environment could assist both the teacher and the learner, and in turn inform the kind of approaches for ISTE. A teacher educator might ask what preconceptions Arab learners bring with them to a Western learning environment. Kostoulas-Makrakis' study of 478 pre-service teachers, all United Arab Emirates (UAE) nationals, in three colleges of education found a high degree of animosity towards Europeans and Europe. "To their minds, Europe stands as the imperialist militaristic enemy, which poses a threat to the Arab or Islamic culture and existence" (Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2005b, p. 506). The Arab respondents report hatred of Christians towards Muslims, and Europeans' lack of moral principles, 'lack of ethics' and 'lack of family ties'.

Muslim learners' assumptions and familiarity with different teaching styles, flowing from different worldviews, may be problematic for the NZT trying to teach using Western approaches. At the fourth World Conference on Muslim Education held in Jakarta, a prescriptive list of teaching approaches was promulgated, drawing on traditional methods of Islamic teaching. The list stipulates that the basic principles for the preparation of teachers manuals for all subjects at various levels should be as follows:

As different teaching methodologies were used by Muslim teachers in the past which have been termed by Dr Sheibani as inductive, deductive, lecture, dialogue or discussion, circle of halaqa, narrative, listening, reading, discussion, memorization and comprehension methods and the method of visiting for the sake of acquisition of knowledge it is hereby recommended that all teacher-training institutes or teacher-education departments should introduce courses on Islamic classics on education so as to learn these techniques and use them as far as they are necessary for school and university stages. (World Conference on Muslim Education (Fourth), 1982, Recommendation 9.3 University Education, pp. 130-134).

While different to some Western approaches, some of these notions complement the skills and dispositions that form Darling-Hammond & Bransford's (2005) vision of professional practice. One teaching method that could marry Islamic and Western learning methods is *halaqa*, a storytelling circle approach, which arose from the period when The Prophet was forced to teach his followers outside the formal structures of his time. It is still an effective way of learning, at more than an intellectual level. Baskerville (2011) recalls the sharing of stories in a circle and says it may have contributed to the change in the dynamics in the relationship between participants. "This physical positioning of people in space may have signaled that students and teachers were learners together, they were equal, and they were in the learning business of understanding one another" (Baskerville, 2011, p. 112). Halaqa offers a shift from the traditional transmission style of teaching, where the teacher presents as a fount of knowledge to the learners, to a shared power relationship where teacher and learners can all see one another in a circle, and are partners in the learning conversation (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). However, Feng et al (2009) warn using models of student-centred learning may not sit easily in Islamic educational structures. They say some of the traditional systems, which have not democratised elitist notions, present problems for transforming education. For example, they cite the oral tradition, arguing "if knowledge survives through reiteration, as, for instance, transmitted by Ulema [scholars], then the developmental aspects of knowledge may be arrested" (Feng et al., 2009, p. 173). In short, tensions can arise from trying to accommodate different worldviews, which are greatly influenced by the learner and the context of the learning environment.

Effective learning is the desired outcome of a programme design process for a course of study. To help ensure an ISTE curriculum is effective in achieving its aims a programme design framework needs to incorporate constructive alignment (Biggs, 2003). Deep learning is enhanced through constructive alignment and overt interconnections between a graduate profile, learning outcomes, learning activities and assessments. A learning-centred approach places greater emphasis on learning than content, and more significance on what learners do than what a teacher does.

In summary, NZTs who aspire to deliver a programme of ISTE for SATs where the learner is supported in ways that lead to their satisfaction will need to consider the those general areas of knowledge, skills and dispositions that are important for an teacher to acquire (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The NZT may employ active, culturally responsive, rich learning experiences underpinned by strong scholarship of learning and teaching.



## **The expectations of SATs**

This thesis originated from my awareness that there was some dissatisfaction by cohorts of SATs undertaking professional development at CPIT. This section explores the documentation offered to SATs and raises some questions about possible mismatches between their expectations and those of the NZTs.

The documentation given to SATs prior to their arrival in New Zealand describes the proposed learning outcomes of their ISTE and some information “which we believe will be useful for you to prepare for your stay” (Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, 2009). This short course descriptor will have shaped the SATs understanding of the importance of each of the three components of their overall programme. The aim of the 300 hour, ten-week programme was to support the efforts of the Saudi Arabian General Organisation for Technical Education and Vocational Training to train and up-skill experienced teaching staff in English Language, ICT study and Technical Education. The focus is clearly on English language acquisition and ICT as these two courses were offered for 268 hours, while Adult Education comprised only 42 in the second half of the programme. The information about the Adult Education segment of the ISTE uses language that is different from that used in the curriculum by New Zealand teacher educators such as that referred to in this chapter. The aim was to “develop students’ skills in the fundamental principles and practices in technical education, including specific issues relating to assessment, delivery and course design in Adult Education contexts” (Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, 2009). This aim does not directly match more theoretical concepts such as the scholarship of learning and teaching, developing a philosophy of teaching, and curriculum alignment. This mismatch, which has been identified only late in the process of writing this thesis, will have been causing confusion for the SATs.

This exploration of the assumptions NZTs make about tertiary teaching and the scholarship of teaching and the literature provided to SATs before their arrival has identified a mismatch which needs to be repaired in the curriculum. This chapter’s description of the assumptions of NZTs will also inform the discussion in the final chapter.

## Chapter 4 - Methodological approach

In this chapter describes the choice of methodology for this research study and the influences that led to it, and argues that the theory and processes associated with case study method and participant observation justify their use in this circumstance. I explain the data collection methods, which include focus group interview, questionnaire, reflective journal, and analytic memorandum; and I profile the participants. I discuss the risks posed by this study, ethical concerns and procedures employed, and an ethical protocol. I examine the tensions associated with my roles as an academic researcher, a cultural agent an employee in an educational institution. Communication difficulties affecting the research design and how these are addressed are explained, including language challenges, availability of participants, and problems arising from using a Western research design to investigate the experience of those from an Arab background. As a means of describing my role as a researcher, the first section explains the influences that led to the choice of methodology for the study, which uses a constructivist epistemological approach, and an interpretivist theoretical perspective.

### Methodological influences

The research falls within a qualitative research approach because it has as its goal “an understanding of the nature of phenomena, and is not necessarily interested in assessing the magnitude and distribution of phenomena” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 2). A qualitative approach is useful because the context demands a research methodology which acknowledges the participation of the researcher in the study as well as in the role of observer. Appropriately, one of the methods used in this case may be described as *participant observation*, if we accept Agar’s (1996) description of participant observation as a cover term for all of the observation and formal and informal interviewing in which anthropologists engage. As a researcher I was directly involved with the topic under investigation in various ways; being a member of a team of NZTs who teach international teachers, consulting with almost all the participants and other stakeholders, and in collecting and analysing of the data. Therefore it would be impractical to try and divorce my agency from the processes and, to some degree, influence on the outcomes of the study. However, I did not employ the method of participant observation as fully as some describe it, in which “the researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 1). I chose to deliberately remain separate from the

living and learning contexts of the particular group of participants, the Saudi Arabian teachers (SATs), although continuing to remain closely involved in the Adult Education unit where they studied.

There can be tension caused by holding onto two identities when using a participant observation method. While taking part as a participant in the study, I am simultaneously undertaking the role of researcher. The latter role aims to articulate the thoughts, emotions and intentions of all the participants, while trying to construct theories to explain the meaning the participants attribute to the situation. Cresswell (2008) describes tensions which can occur at different levels; firstly, within the individuals in the study group – including the researcher; then, within the group as an entity of itself; and thirdly, within the researcher as they aim to formulate a description of what is at play. Cumulatively these tensions develop into a new construct, at a fourth level, which Cresswell describes as “an attribute or characteristic expressed in an abstract, general way” (2008, p. 637). In this study these tensions have not greatly limited its progress. Rather, they have helped to reveal to me the different layers of the issues to be explored, for example, in informing a wider academic view of the purpose and practices of teacher education and a deeper understanding of the need for more culturally responsive teaching.

This study is underpinned by constructivism, whereby meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the world. “The constructivist movement in cognitive psychology posits that individuals gradually build their own understanding of the world through experience and maturation” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 22) so that “meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. Crotty asks, “Isn’t this precisely what we find when we move from one era to another or from one culture to another?” (1998, p. 9). To that end, rather than try to articulate a complete truth about how SATs experience any part of their lives, including learning about teaching in another part of the world, in this investigation I acknowledge that all the participants, including myself as researcher, contribute to making meaning of our world(s) and our experiences according to our personal understandings. Moreover, individuals interpret with the help of others, so that “through interaction the individual constructs meaning” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 36). This does not mean to say that the derived meaning necessarily will be agreed by all involved, nor even that consensus is inevitable. Rather, meanings and understandings proposed by me as the researcher would attract various degrees of agreement amongst the participants.

Another theoretical perspective of this study is interpretive, which challenges the idea that any observation could ever be free from theory, that it is neutral and objective, because human interactions are implicitly value-laden. Qualitative researchers, concerned with the meaning people attribute to their experiences, attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations (Bogdan & Taylor, 2007, p. 34). In this view people's behaviour is essentially subjective, by which it is assumed that "... human experience is mediated by interpretation" (ibid. pp. 35-36) and events do not possess their own meaning; rather, meaning is conferred on them. Therefore, by using an interpretive, constructivist stance, and employing a participant observation method within a qualitative approach, this study attempts to make sense of the experience of SATs studying abroad.

## **Case study**

*Single case study* is a suitable method to employ for this study, within a qualitative research approach. It fits well with the five components of research design for case studies, as proposed by Robert Yin (1994). Firstly, the study's question, *How do Saudi Arabian teachers of adult learners experience learning about teaching in a New Zealand context?* begins with a 'how' or 'why' question. Secondly, the study proposition - or purpose - directs what should be examined within the scope of the study, namely this specific group of learner teachers, in this location, and specifically their experience of the process of learning about teaching. Next, the unit of analysis by definition excludes others, which in this case identifies a certain group of teachers from a particular country of origin. Linking the data to the proposition or purpose, implies that the primary source of data needs to be the 'voice' of the participants themselves, in this case of the learner teachers. Other voices may be included as well, so that the opinions of other participants may reasonably be considered if they support, and help explain, the ways the experience is described by the group. Lastly, the criteria for interpreting the study's findings need to match the intent behind the research question and "... a research design should lay the foundations for the [data] analysis" (Yin, 1994 p. 25). The criteria for interpreting this study are recognizable within the questions asked of and the responses elicited from the participants. In summary, a single case study matches the circumstances of this particular research study.

Case study is "the examination of an instance in action" (Simons, 1996, p. 225), although Cresswell distinguishes between researchers who identify 'case' as an object of study (Stake, 1995) and those who consider it to be a process of inquiry (Merriam, 1998). A definition of case study is "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g. an activity, event, process or individuals) based on extensive data collection" (Cresswell, 2008, p. 476). Cresswell describes

'bounded' as a case is separated out for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries. Yet, I suggest that Cresswell's distinction between an *intrinsic* case selected for study "because it's unusual and has merit in and of itself" (2008, p. 476), and an *instrumental* case "because it serves its purpose of illuminating a particular issue" (ibid) is somewhat arbitrary. In fact, both intrinsic and instrumental elements may often overlap, as they do in this study. The aim of finding insights from the experience of these SATs that might be applicable elsewhere, not only has merit in and of itself, and grows out of the particular situation under review, but also may highlight issues associated with culturally responsive teaching in a tertiary context.

Case study has its drawbacks. In the first instance, as Bogdan and Biklen point out, "picking a focus, be it a place in the school, a particular group, or some other aspect, is always an artificial act, for you break off a piece of the world that is normally integrated" (2007, p. 63). Moreover, the story is never stationary; and "one difficulty in case studies is that the subject matter continually changes" (Bogdan & Taylor, 2007, p. 68). Case studies have also been criticized because they are usually more time-consuming and labor-intensive than other survey methods (Daniels & Cannice, 2004; Leonard-Barton, 1990; M. Nieto & Pérez, 2000; Simon, Sohal, & Brown, 1996), and because the interviews "may be affected by time constraints, interruptions, the presence of third parties monitoring the discussion, sudden crises facing the company which distract the interviewee, and several other factors" (Welch, 2000, cited in Vissak 2010, p. 376). Moreover, during interviews, "the respondents may present their past decisions and actions in a very favorable light (but this cannot be always avoided in using other methods either)" (Vissak 2010). Inevitably, as Crotty points out, "at best, our outcomes will be suggestive rather than conclusive" (1998, p. 13).

Case study, however, has several strengths. Vissak (2010) says that, contrary to those research methods that aim at statistical correlations and focus less on their underlying explanations, case study research can help to discover causal relationships, help understand how and why everything has happened in a certain way (Yin, 1994), and "create thick, interesting, and easily readable descriptions and rich understandings of phenomena in their natural settings" (Vissak, 2010, p. 371-372). Case studies can be also used for "deeply investigating dynamic, experiential and complex processes and areas" (Vissak, 2010, p. 373) partly because data can be collected from multiple levels, perspectives and sources. In case study research it is possible to generalize from only one case, in contrast to quantitative evaluation models, which promise conclusive evidence and thus terminate inquiry, case study offers opportunities for policy makers to "learn from the evidence, to expand the scope of inquiry, to reconstruct their own

understanding in order to inform their judgments on policy directions” (Simons, 1996, p. 226). Case study affords the chance to investigate an issue in context, such as an innovation, to try and understand the broad range of factors that contribute to the success or failure of the innovation; to capture the complexity of the interactions as the innovative ideas are interpreted in practice; and to understand the uniqueness of the case. Simons says “one is reminded of the similarity of educational case study to one of the purposes of anthropology - to render the unfamiliar familiar and the familiar strange (1996, p. 225).” Consequently, because of the need to capture the ‘voice’ of the participants, the desire to illuminate the particular issue of teaching international teachers with a view to generalizing any findings, and the bounded nature of the question, single case study is a suitable method for a study such as this.

### **Data collection process**

The choice of a single case study influences the options for data collection. The most suitable tools for this method are interviews, focus group, written questionnaire, journal, and field notes (Yin, 1994), all of which were used in this case study and are described and justified in this section.

*Interviews* are a fitting means of eliciting data from participants in qualitative research because they “can reach the parts which other methods cannot reach” (Wellington, 2000, p. 73). With interviews we may “gather information regarding the individual’s experiences and knowledge; his or her opinions, beliefs and feelings” (Best & Kahn, 2006, p. 267). Talking as a means of data collection, compared to writing, is less formal, less structured and is more spontaneous, and because talking allows less time for respondents to deliberate it encourages top of the mind, unrehearsed responses, than is possible when providing written answers. Also, verbal data collection helps avoid literacy issues that may apply when asking participants to write their thoughts.

There is debate about the degree of influence the interviewer should have. On the one hand Patton insists that the purpose of open-ended interviewing “is not to put things in someone else’s mind ... but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed” (1990). Best and Kahn claim that the interviewer “should not express any opinions and should advise the participants that he is not going to be judgmental in any way” (2006, p. 267). On the other hand Kvale claims an interview “is literally an inter view, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale, 1996, p. 2, cited in Mutch, 2005, p. 127). Either way, as Cohen and Manion (1994) point out, research interviews serve three purposes;

they are a principle way of gathering information relating to the research objectives, they can be used to test hypotheses (or suggest new ones), and they can be used to support other methods. Interviews provide an opportunity for the researcher to ask initial structured questions, then probe further to mine for added information (Roach, 2007). Good interview technique avoids using hypothetical questions because they are less likely to provide 'thick' data (Glesne, 1998), as are leading questions which may give the interviewee hints about what would be a desirable answer (Patton, 1990). Accordingly, interviews are a suitable means of data gathering for a study such as this, however their use is largely within a focus group setting.

*Focus groups* were used in this case study because they offer an appropriate vehicle "as an adjunct" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 376) to conducting interviews where a case study involves a group of participants, as in this research. Mutch (2005, p. 128) claims that focus groups can be a useful tool "for busy practitioners because they combine the best of surveys (a broader sample) and interviews (an in-depth response)." This study meets the conditions for focus group interviews recommended by Hinds (2000) because it is based on the principle of self-disclosure, set in a comfortable environment and uses a particular type of questioning. There are between 7 and 10 participants who were asked to follow a set of focus group rules, and the aim of the focus group was to "gather information about people's perceptions, ideas and experiences" (Hinds, 2000, p. 41).

Group interviews such as the focus group offer a way to move beyond the personal interaction of an interviewer and informant through "the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Morgan, 1988, p. 12, cited in Brenner, 2006, p. 360). So, focus group method is apposite for a group of Arab participants because of their societal values, such as collectivity, in-group membership, consultation, consensus, harmony and communication style (A. Thomas, 2008). This communal approach dates as far back as ancient Mediterranean peasant society, where Marshall (2010) notes "personal identity was an inherently relational rather than an individualistic construct ... what anthropologists term a 'dyadic' or group-oriented personality" (p. 67) where self-understanding and self-worth involve internalizing and satisfying expectations of others (Malina, 1993). The same still applies in Middle Eastern cultures today, and therefore the participants of this study would find a focus group setting a natural environment in which to describe their experience. Using a semi-structured question approach participants are able to be interviewed together as a focus group, in which "the reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 288). A focus group

offers the participants the chance to support each other, while also providing a platform for developing questions by the focus group moderator.

There are limitations to the focus group method, such as the potential for one or two participants to dominate the discussion and for a group view to be presented which some members may privately not agree with, to some degree or other, but feel compelled to go along with (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Also the participants “may react with each other rather than with the interviewer, such that the views of the participants can emerge – the participants’ rather than the researcher’s agenda can predominate. It is from the *interaction* of the group that the data emerge” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 376, italics in original). To offset these risks requires careful facilitation by the moderator (Bens, 2011), and focus groups are said to operate more successfully “if they are composed of relative strangers rather than friends” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 377). In this case the participants and moderator were relative strangers, and the SATs came from institutions throughout Saudi Arabia and did not appear to have well developed friendships.

There is a clear fit between the objectives and nature of this case study and reasons Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, pp. 376-7) say focus groups are useful for, namely, orienting to a particular field of focus; developing themes, topics and schedules flexibly for subsequent interviews and/or questionnaires; generating hypotheses that derive from the insights and data from the group; and generating and evaluating qualitative data about attitudes, values and opinions from different sub-groups of a population quickly at low cost. A focus group may empower participants to speak out in their own words; encourage groups, rather than individuals, to voice opinions; and encourage non-literate participants. Accordingly, focus group is an apt means of gathering data for a study such as this. However, while on the one hand a focus group may provide greater coverage of issues than would be possible in a survey, on the other hand they preclude a means of capturing private opinions, because focus groups are by nature a public environment. Further, they engage a verbal, at the expense of a written, way of communicating. Both of these limitations can be ameliorated by use of a written survey.

Participants in this study were invited to complete a post-course written questionnaire (Appendix 1), which employed open-ended questions. A *questionnaire* affords some degree of triangulation of data to complement the voices captured in the focus groups interviews, “to enable respondents to write a free response in their own terms, to explain and qualify their responses and avoid the limitations of pre-set categories of response” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 248). A questionnaire provides a vehicle for the participants to write in their first language (e.g. Arabic). The standard advantages for using questionnaire are an efficient use of time, anonymity for the



respondent, the possibility of a high return rate and the use of standardised questions (Munn & Drever, 1990, p. 2). In addition, a private questionnaire provides an individual with a confidential vehicle that might encourage more honest responses, which a more public mode such as focus group, may not allow. Their personal views may be expressed anonymously free of peer influence, addressing the possibility of private disagreement with others in a focus group, and any unwillingness to articulate alternative views in public. Also, the written mode of communication, unlike the verbal interview, may produce fresh ideas through the deeper, reflexive nature of the process, because written responses allow extra time to respond rather than the immediate, more reactive, unrehearsed nature of a verbal interview. The permanency of seeing ideas written down can also demand more cognitive scrutiny.

The main limitations when using a questionnaire are that “the information collected tends to *describe* rather than *explain* why things are the way they are, the information can be superficial, and time needed to draft and pilot the questionnaire is often underestimated” (Munn & Drever, 1990, p. 5). By timing the completion of the questionnaire at the end of the data-gathering phase however, should have produced two benefits. Firstly, the preceding focus group conversations would have helped to stir up thoughts about the research topic *per se*. The participants would have begun the process of internal reflection by the exposure to the discussions held within the focus groups. Secondly, the questionnaire allowed private opinions to be expressed more freely, unlike the public focus group environment when the participants may have felt coerced to agree with an opinion voiced by others. Also, the participants may have been reluctant in the focus group setting to criticise aspects of their experience while in New Zealand. Therefore, when they completed the questionnaire, knowing that there would be no follow-up after leaving the country, the learner teachers would have less need for courteously withholding comments that some international students perceive may offend their hosts. Accordingly, a written questionnaire is a valid means of gathering data for research such as this, and proved to be a suitable tool in this study.

A reflective *journal* (Holly, 1984) was used by the researcher in this case study to record my developing thoughts and keep track of my role as researcher as the study progressed. The views captured in my personal journal before, during and after the SATs arrived at CPIT. My reflective journal complements the data provided by other participants in the research study, helps inform my analysis, and influences the formulation of the views expressed in the dissertation.

*Analytic memos* were used in this case study because they are able to chart the progress and examine the route of a research study (Janesick, 2010). An analytic memo is completed “periodically throughout the data collection process, analyzing data by creating connections to literature, asking critical questions of the data, and noting emerging themes, changes to design and/or teaching practices” (Phillips & Carr, 2007, p. 562). I used the analytic memo as a less personal, introspective tool for reflecting on particular issues that arose and which I perceived to be at a distance from my role as a researcher. I wrote occasional analytic memos, for example after reading a text or having a conversation with colleagues not involved in study in any way, but who shared views about working with international students. The analytic memos complement the personal journal and provide further triangulation of the data.

### **Data collection sequence**

This section describes the process of data collection and includes details of the sequence of events during the study, including the undertakings of the researcher and other participants.

The first of two focus groups took place on 21 July 2009 before the ISTE course began. Its purpose was to gauge the expectations of the SATs about their ISTE on arrival. The interviews were recorded on two digital audio recorders in a meeting room at CPIT. There were three participants from the group of ten SATs all of whom responded about equally to all questions. Most of the conversation was in Arabic, translated into English by a translator (not the CPIT International Arab Student Advisor) for me as moderator, and from English into Arabic for the participants.

A focus group planned for 9 August, 2009 was postponed because a number of participants who had promised to take part did not attend the recording session. Non-attendance could be explained as a simple oversight, but equally possible it could be a demonstration of reluctance by the participants to take part in the research study. This reluctance might be attributed to an attitude about academic research, and/or the nature of their ISTE, or any number of reasons. It could be explained as normal cultural behaviour for people from the Middle East. Smith (2007) reports that at times only one or two of those enrolled in a Learning Through Teaching programme she taught in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had been present at her classes. That means in practice “the timing of the sessions sometimes becomes fluid, a fact that some participants from cultures like my own with a monochronic interpretation can find hard to deal with” (L. Smith, 2007, p. 173). I too found it difficult, particularly after a lot of preparation had been expended, agreement reached with the learner teachers for them to take part in the

research, and the very tight constraints for capturing the data within a limited timeframe. The tension non-attendance generates can be creative and informative, rather than disruptive, and can help in the construction of meaning (Cresswell, 2008), as happened in this case. The participants apologised to me the next day for their non-attendance. All said they were still happy to take part in the recording of the second focus group, and this was endorsed by their attendance two days later.

The second focus group was recorded on 11 August 2009, after the ISTE course had finished, on the final day before the SATs left CPIT to return home. It involved nine of the ten in the cohort of learner teachers. One, who was most silent during the recording of the session, walked out during the focus group without any explanation. The remaining eight completed a written questionnaire immediately after the audio recording of the focus group interviews. As in the first focus group, the translator interpreted between the learner teacher participants and myself as moderator.

A significant event during the delivery of the ISTE course affected the findings. One focus group participant reported at length during the second focus group about a perceived oversight in the curriculum, namely a lack of information on how to teach large groups. In fact such information was provided by the NZT to the SATs as part of their ISTE, however a logistical issue meant that the information was not forwarded by his peers to this SAT, who has been absent during the large group teaching segment of the ISTE. The perspective of this individual about his perception of a shortcoming in course content influenced the other participants of the focus group. Therefore part of the proceedings of the focus group interviews, and subsequently the recorded comments, were skewed to create the false impression that large group teaching was not taught. However, allied matters – apart from teaching large groups - were also discussed in the second focus group, which highlighted differences in the wider context of New Zealand and Saudi Arabian learning environments.

## **Participants**

The following section provides details about the participants of this research study, namely the International Student Advisor, the group of ten male Saudi Arabian learner teachers, myself as researcher and focus group moderator, and the translator. Some risks faced with the case study are acknowledged, and I describe how these were addressed where possible.

The first participant in this case study is an International Student Advisor at CPIT. The position is held by a Christchurch resident who has emigrated from a country where visiting

overseas students at CPIT normally reside. The role of the International Student Advisor is to assist international students temporarily studying in New Zealand with practical support for non-curriculum matters that may affect their learning, such as enrolment, health and well-being, communications, language matters (e.g. interpreting), and official or legal areas (e.g. passports, travel). The resident Arab International Student Advisor at the time of this study enthusiastically supported its undertaking. He has been a teacher in the Middle East for 30 years, at primary, secondary level, and in higher education in architectural studies. The International Student Advisor signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix 2a) in order to help ensure the ethical intentions are maintained.

The second participant in the study is a group of ten male Saudi Arabian tertiary teachers aged approximately 25-29 years. The cohort contains about half the number of those that had attended CPIT courses in the previous four years, which the International Student Advisor attributed to the timing of Ramadan in 2009. The influence of this important month-long religious observance not only reduced the number of potential participants but also meant the duration of their stay was reduced from the previous ten weeks down to eight weeks. This had implications for the scope and completion of the curriculum, forcing a truncated delivery of the ISTE programme.

Historically, many students from the Arabian Gulf have studied in the UK, which is a three-hour plane flight from their home, and includes free hostels, popular courses, and a system well oriented to students from Oman, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. Some choose to study in New Zealand for two reasons; firstly, visas can be bought very easily on arrival at the airport; secondly, it was recommended by peers through word of mouth. Ten years earlier 20 students had come from Saudi Arabia to study with Air New Zealand to be pilots and engineers, and this experience had gone well. By 2009, 350 were attending the University of Canterbury and 150 Lincoln University. Saudi Arabian students like the quiet, the snow, and very effective teaching of English language in Christchurch, plus it is cheaper than the UK or US. Most students receive government scholarships as a result of an arms-for-education arrangement with the US established about three decades ago. Usually Saudi Arabian learner teachers come to New Zealand during their summer holiday (June-August) and they like the shock of the temperature change from about 40°C to 8°C in Christchurch. Also, the Advisor reports, they like the chance to taste alcohol, eat pork, go to movies, and connect with women other than their sisters or mothers not wearing a veil. They find the food very different too. Some participants have previously

studied to be teachers for various lengths of time in Saudi Arabia or the UK, usually after they have completed their engineering or computer studies.

While there is no inventory at CPIT of the religious beliefs of international students from Saudi Arabia, including the participants in this study, some take the opportunity to practice Islamic observances during their days on campus, for example, using the prayer room at customary times. However, the exposure of Saudi Arabian men to a Western lifestyle, and few family constraints during their time away from home, is an eye-opener for some. Off campus many Muslim students do not stay closely connected with their faith while in New Zealand. For example, on Friday afternoons the International Student Advisor offered lectures in the mosque about their religion, but of the 500 Saudis in Christchurch only about 10-15 attended.

The overriding reason teachers desire ISTE relates to worldwide expectations about academic quality, which are influencing Islamic educational institutions, so that now more is at stake for academic staff wishing to retain and improve their employment status. After five years teaching professional development in a Middle Eastern (United Arab Emirates) offshore campus of an Australian university to teachers in higher education, Smith confirms “as in other parts of the world, higher education in this region has become subject to quality assurance, with some countries requiring a rigorous accreditation process, as in the UAE” (L. Smith, 2007, p. 159). The Iran-based Islamic World Science Citation Center has recently launched a new classification system for Islamic universities, using such criteria as research and education performance, international cooperation, and scientific impact. The first phase of the system has been implemented by ranking Iran’s universities and research institutes (Sawahel, 2011). It is reasonable to assume the classifications will be embraced by Saudi Arabia as well, and should impact on the expectations of teaching quality as part of education performance.

The final participant in this study is myself as researcher and focus group moderator. I work as a teacher educator supporting teachers in vocational higher education at CPIT. My job is to help them develop a second professional expertise as teachers, in addition to their other specialist discipline or profession, such as in the health, hospitality, science, construction, commerce, or creative industries. My own professional journey has moved from being a practitioner in the world of the media (primarily in commercial and not-for-profit radio) to teaching media studies in New Zealand ITPs and at a university in the UK, and now teaching ISTE courses within the ITP sector.

My involvement in this case is only partly participatory or self-reflective (Cresswell, 2008) in that I was somewhat at arms length from the participants, even though they were studying

where I normally practice as a tertiary teacher. Although I had played a part in the design of the course before the arrival of the learner teachers, I was purposefully not directly involved in teaching or assessing this particular group of students, in order to remain to a certain extent a 'non-participant observer' (Cresswell, 2008). This assisted me in my role as moderator of the focus group discussions, and allowed freer dialogue with the participants, since they did not identify me with any aspect of teaching their particular course. I have long experience in a moderator role in the media, on boards of trustees, in teaching and in management roles. I have found that good moderation involves keeping the discussion focused on the subject, gaining agreement to provide open honest testimony, encouraging a free-flow of ideas, achieving coverage of the prepared questions and lines of inquiry, and probing for depth of responses. As moderator, I take great care not to 'lead the witness' and endeavour to show neutrality where possible, towards the participants and the content of the discussion, in short, "chairing the meeting so that a balance is struck between being too directive and veering off the point, i.e. keeping the meeting open-ended but to the point"(Cohen et al., 2007, p. 377).

I do not include amongst this list of participants the NZT who taught the SATs during this case study, who is also a member of the Adult Education team at CPIT, because they did not directly contribute to the research question, which aims to understand how Saudi Arabian teachers of adult learners experience learning about teaching from New Zealand teacher educators. The focus instead is determinedly on the SATs and other stakeholders, such as the International Student Advisor. However, while no direct contributions were sought from the NZT teaching this particular cohort, my informal personal communications with them are included in my personal journal and accordingly provided supplementary data.

Finally, a translator assisted the participants and the moderator/researcher during focus group interviews to translate from English to Arabic and vice versa. (Arabic is used for written communication and most formal oral communication from Morocco to Iraq). He translated transcripts of the focus group proceedings, the questionnaire - both at the design stage, before presenting it to the learner teachers, and then afterwards the written responses on the completed questionnaire form - and other documents, such as the Information form (Appendix 3) and Consent form (Appendix 4). Occasionally the translator experienced difficulties translating the English questions into Arabic for the participants in the focus groups; happily those participants whose English is to a sufficient standard helped translate instructions and concepts for their peers. Consequently, there is a possibility that the original questions and instructions were modified during translation, and inaccurate to some degree, which influences the validity of some

replies. The translator also signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix 2b) in order to help ensure the ethical objectives are maintained.

## **Ethical issues**

This section explains the significant challenges in the study that pertain to ethical issues and the role of the researcher, and describes the ethical protocol that has been employed. Several risks were posed by this study, including the educational setting and the potential to interfere with the participants' course of study; the cultural context and the potential for different world views to influence the intended outcomes; the possibility of miscommunication between the researcher and those participants who did not have English as a first language; this study's impact on the sustainability of the international student programme at CPIT; and the need for ethical protection and informed consent from participants undertaking academic research. I describe how these were addressed where possible.

The major participants in this case were students at CPIT, therefore assurances were essential to ensure the research study did not affect the delivery, and their successful completion, of their ISTE, so the research could only proceed with ethical approval by the CPIT academic research human ethics committee. Participants were fully informed about the purposes, conduct and possible dissemination of the research, following normal academic research ethical practice. They signed a Consent Form (see Appendix 4), which achieved several purposes. The consent conditions ensured they were able to freely choose whether to participate or not; were able to withdraw without fear of consequences; were not coerced to participate; were not deceived about the purposes or methods; were assured that any data they provide will remain confidential; were assured that they could not be identified; reassured that they should not be subject to any physical, psychological, emotional or cultural harm; advised who they could approach if they had concerns about the research; were advised that the data would be kept for 24 months and that it would be fairly and accurately reported (Mutch, 2005, p. 78-79). Both CPIT and University of Canterbury academic ethics committees granted approval for the case study to proceed.

An ethical protocol (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) is employed throughout this research study. It evolves from views about the participants, and that the key to ethical practice is to think carefully, deeply and reflexively about the power relationships in the research process and to understand "the consequences that your intervention into their life may have" (Boden, Kenway, & Epstein, 2005, p. 94), and mindful of "the consequences of our findings for them and

their wider group” (Boden et al., 2005, p. 95). The elements of the ethical protocol have been addressed as follows:

*The beneficial consequences of this study.* The study aims to identify how Saudi Arabian teachers experience learning about teaching in New Zealand. Consequently it may identify ways to improve course design and delivery of ISTE professional development at CPIT and the effectiveness of the programme offered. The findings of the study should assist NZTs in higher education to improve their relationships with international teachers through culturally responsive teaching, and support the sustainability of vocational programmes of study for international students in Aotearoa New Zealand. The aim of the study is ultimately to improve the teaching skills of teachers in Saudi Arabian institutes.

The above aims are aspirational and presume in good faith that all stakeholders share similar intentions for the research as well as the ISTE programme. It is possible that some or all the participants have other agendas, which may not lead to the outcomes above.

*Informed consent of the participants.* Participants were asked to agree in writing for their comments to be included, with the promise of anonymity and the right of withdrawal at any time up until the focus groups were completed. An Information sheet (Appendix 3) in both English and Arabic was read by all participants in advance of the focus group interviews, explaining the research study aims and their rights. All participants signed a Consent form (Appendix 4) before any recording began. No information about the study was withheld from the participants, who were invited to ask about any aspect of the study before, during and after its undertaking. Phone numbers of the supervisor, the researcher and the International Student Advisor are included on the Information sheet (Appendix 3), in case participants wish to make a query.

*Confidentiality of the interview participants.* Confidentiality of the opinions of the individuals were compromised by the public nature of the focus group interviews, although there is no name attribution associated with any of the comments. Comments provided when answering the questionnaire are anonymous and cannot be traced to individual participants. No legal or practical problems are foreseen in the protection of the participants’ anonymity. The focus group interviews and questionnaire transcriptions were not made available to the participants themselves because they returned to Saudi Arabia immediately after the data was collected; they were accessible only by the researcher, his supervisors and the translator. The recordings were kept under lock at CPIT for 24 months, and then destroyed.



*Consequences of the study for the participants.* As a result of this research, it is possible that the SATs became more informed and thoughtful about the value and content of their ISTE course through being asked to reflect on it in the focus group interviews. Researchers “have a responsibility to the wider communities in which they live” (Boden et al., 2005, p. 97) and although no harm is envisaged coming to the participants as a consequence of the study, later publication of findings will place them in the public domain and the superiors in their home country may be able to read them. There is no predicting how they may be viewed at that stage. Some stakeholders may take exception to some findings, should they show them in an unfavourable light. The International Student Advisor was asked to explain these issues to the participants, who had the option of not taking part and most chose to be involved.

In summary, this ethical protocol (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) has helped inform the design and processes of the research study. Through the protocol a number of risks were identified and where possible these have been addressed, including tensions associated with the role of the researcher, which are elaborated on in the next section.

### **Risks associated with the study**

As a researcher and a participant observer in this study there are tensions involving my cultural and professional identities with associated risks. I bring my own cultural capital to the research process. I personally encounter difficulties as a Pakeha New Zealander endeavouring to draw out meanings that Saudi Arabian teachers make of their experience while in Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite holding some understandings in common with the SATs, such as sharing the role of being a teacher in higher education, I have limited understanding of their mindsets and the contexts in which the participants in the study live and work. Different cultures have diverse expectations and perspectives about teachers or other figures in authority, and this may have influenced the veracity and/or quality of the data provided by some of the participants.

A tension exists between maintaining working relations with fellow staff members, especially NZTs at CPIT, while also preserving my role as researcher. This tension influences my own input and analysis in this research study. This case study fits within the wider political context of delivering courses to international students in New Zealand, within the vocational sector of tertiary education, within a particular institution. There are professional expectations of me, both as a researcher and as an employee. The latter requires that I maintain good relations with fee-paying students of CPIT, partly to attract other international students to attend future courses, thereby ensuring their sustainability. However, as a researcher, it is incumbent on me to take care

not to gloss over difficult issues, or to put a favourable light on any poor practice or negative perceptions unearthed by the data.

To address the tensions afforded by my role as a researcher, and to address ethical and professional risks, I have maintained regular contact with my research supervisors, who have provided guidance to ensure rigour around the gathering, analysis and reporting of data, and help clarify the role of the researcher. My overall approach to academic research is to work with all participants in an atmosphere of mutual respect. I acknowledge that potentially the ways I show respect to cultures that are different from my own may be perceived in unintended ways, which could be hidden from me. As Philips says, “there are differences in cultural knowledge that can contribute to the breakdown in communication wherever one speaker has no direct knowledge of what another is speaking about” (1993, p. 127). My lack of understanding of, for example, an Arab worldview, coupled with my own prejudices and preconceptions, informed by a Western cultural upbringing, may work against my best of intentions. I have endeavoured to ensure my role as researcher was transparent. I acknowledged to the participants that although on this course I had only a ‘researcher’ role, I had had a ‘tutor’ role on previous courses. Another NZT remained the exclusive tutor and assessor of the learner teachers on the 2009 course, in place of myself, to reduce risks that might compromise this research study, both in collecting the data and reporting on it later.

A core objective of maintaining my role as a researcher and acknowledging the ethical issues associated with the study, has been to keep the interests of those being researched foremost and to maintain trustworthiness with the participants. I have made every effort to ensure this research meets the criteria for validity, credibility and believability, as assessed by the various stakeholders and the participants (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001).

### ***Risks associated with communication difficulties affecting research design***

There are tensions and communication difficulties faced during a research study, including language challenges, the availability of the participants, the cultural constraints faced in research of this kind and the researcher’s world view. A Western research design, and how it might affect the anticipated outcomes when working with participants from an Arab background, incurs risk.

Language challenges pervade this study, affecting all participants. I am limited by my inability to understand Arabic and for all the other participants English is a second language, therefore the quality of communication is compromised. When deliberating over complex

concepts such as teaching and learning theory at a deeper level, conceptual ideas are often difficult to articulate in another language. Language challenges not only apply in academic research of this nature; they also operate wherever international students experience the complexity of studying away from their home country, in an unfamiliar environment. The International Student Advisor has been an important player in addressing the language issues. He has strongly supported the study from the outset, encouraging me in my role as a researcher and ensuring participation by the SATs, explaining issues of confidentiality and anonymity to the participants, and reassuring them that the privacy and confidentiality of the learner teachers' responses would be maintained during and after transcription. He has checked the Arabic/English translations (and at times re-translated for greater accuracy) the focus group recording transcriptions, the questionnaires, and the written documents.

The non-availability or reluctance of participants to contribute to any study is a risk when collecting research data. Non-involvement of participants can occur because they have other commitments, and/or may be reluctant to take part in a project that they perceive is not likely to benefit them. In this study no incentives, gifts or recompense have been offered to any participants for their contributions, except for the translator who was paid by CPIT, and the International Student Advisor, who holds a paid position at CPIT. The International Student Advisor spoke at length to the learner teachers explaining the aims of the study, and then invited me to ask for them for their involvement. To address the risk of non-participation in this case as many barriers as possible were removed for the learner teachers, for example the audio recordings of focus groups were scheduled to occur at convenient times and locations, such as immediately after class and not during prayer times. Almost all those eligible and invited to participate did so, however, some learner teachers elected not to attend one of the focus groups (or perhaps forgot to come along).

There is a risk associated with the suitability of the standard Western research design for investigating the experience of those with an Arab background. This study follows a Western model of research practice, beginning with designing the aims and methodology of the study, choosing methods of data collection, producing a proposal, attaining approval from an ethics committee at a higher education institution (in fact, two), arranging the time and resources (e.g. technology) to complete the study, working under the supervision of an experienced (Pakeha) academic and taking advice from other experienced researchers. To address the risks associated with involving Arab participants I have sought guidance from my supervisors, who assisted in

drawing up a list of contributors (such as the International Student Advisor) to address these issues, according to criteria related to the aims of the study.

Cultural assumptions are embedded within each aspect of the individual-centred Western research design. For example, asking the participants to sign formal information and consent forms, granting approval for the use of all or part of the recordings in the future. In certain cultures the concept of individual opinion is regarded as of much less value than that of the wider community in which the individual lives, such as family, religion or race. Indigenous cultures and some religious-based communities, endorse community responsibility. Yet in the West students are measured and recognised individually, and awarded accordingly for their personal efforts and abilities. Similarly in academia, the individual researcher (or collegial researchers) tend to operate as distinct entities, often receiving reward according to criteria that place personal efforts and abilities above community benefit, e.g. Performance Based Research Funding. The institution where they are employed lays claim to their academic accomplishments as part of its infrastructure, and sees research endeavours as part of the educational matrix that tends to “... benefit the researcher and not the community of study” (Cram, 2001, p. 37). Similarly, the practices for dealing with risk management in a research study may be inappropriate for those from a non-Western background. For example, the act of signing a consent agreement form rather than providing reassurance may be inherently threatening to people from any country with brutal means of suppressing independent thought. Also taking part in discussions that are recorded could lead to dangerous repercussions in some places.

Whose values apply within a research study, whose meaning is being articulated, and can it be represented by anyone other than the person providing the information? Gall et al say that “the value-laden character of research has become a matter of considerable concern among educators who study racism in society and education” (2007, p. 17). As Davidson and Tolich note, “no method of inquiry can operate outside its own social and cultural location” (2003, p. 35). Just as any news story in the media is mediated by the journalist who writes it, the editor who prepares it for publishing, and the reader / viewer / listener who take delivery of it, so does a researcher influence the outcomes of a research study. Phenomenologists emphasize the subjective aspects of people’s behaviour, in which they assume that “... human experience is mediated by interpretation” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 35-36) and events do not possess their own meaning; rather, meaning is conferred on them.

To address my risks as researcher regarding how to approach and work with participants from an unfamiliar culture, and to help those participants feel culturally safe during the study, I

have sought guidance from the Arab International Student Advisor. He has acted as liaison between the participants and me, and recommended a suitable translator, whom he has also supported. I offered courtesy and hospitality, as is common practice for visitors to an Arab household, for example dates, nuts and non-alcoholic drink were provided during the focus group recordings, and these efforts appeared to be well received, although the food was not partaken.

### ***Risks for the New Zealand teacher educator***

The NZT has not been formally involved as a participant in this case study, which was primarily concerned with experience of the SATs undertaking ISTE. For the same reasons that I have chosen to maintain a degree of non-participation by not being involved in teaching this particular cohort of SATs, the NZT has maintained a clear distance from the research process and simply focused on teaching them. The NZT's views have not been solicited and do not form part of the data, except perhaps when informal comments have been noted in my personal journal. These were mostly administrative matters, such as when the timetable might allow access to the participants to invite them to attend a focus group. However, there are risks for the NZT, such as comments by participants advancing their views about the teaching, the programme design and perhaps the NZT personally. The voice of the NZT was not included in the research design, and so their viewpoint cannot be used to inform responses to such comments. In a similar way, there are risks in this research for other stakeholders associated with the visit of SATs to New Zealand and to CPIT in particular. The main way to address these risks is to acknowledge them and to treat the data and those affected by the findings respectfully. Questions raised in the research may be taken into a future study, but of course any unresolved issues cannot be retrospectively answered.

The scoping nature of single case study means the data is by definition limited, the findings constrained, and there will be the limitations to the outcomes. The NZT, and less directly the other stakeholders, have been very supportive of this research study, providing time and resources to see it completed, as a means of advancing the body of knowledge, endorsing the aims of the research, and with an assumption that it may lead to improvements in future ISTE professional development.

In summary, this chapter describes and justifies the case study methodology and participant observation methods. The group of SATs forms a natural instance of a single case study. Within the context of the method and the associated risks, the next chapter analyses the findings from the data.

## **Chapter 5 - Results, Analysis/Synthesis**

This chapter reports the analysis of the data related to how Saudi Arabian teachers experience learning about teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand. Firstly, the inductive method of analysis is outlined, the major themes that emerge from the raw data are described, and the data analysis reported. Particular reference is made to the Adult Education segment of the ISTE, and the participants' perspectives about ways it might be improved for future learner teachers, which provide another insight into the experience of the participants. Finally, those teaching approaches from their ISTE that the participants identify as worthwhile taking back to their homeland are described.

### **Method of analysis**

The research methodology for this study belongs in the domain of grounded theory, drawing themes out of the raw data. Nonetheless, the single case study method chosen does not include the iterative elements of a pure grounded theory approach. Rather, the limited scope of this study and the time available to gather the data, meant that the views and experience of only one group of participants were investigated.

The process of analysis involves working with data, "organising them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesising them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (Bogdan & Taylor, 2007, p. 153). In this research study I used an inductive approach to analysis, the purpose of which Thomas says is "to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies" (2006, p. 238). This contrasts with deductive investigations which "set out to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator" (D. Thomas, 2006, p. 240). Inductive analysis is consistent with Strauss and Corbin's description, that "the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data" (1998, p. 12). Thomas (2006) lists three purposes underlying the development of the general inductive analysis approach; firstly, the purpose is to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format and secondly, to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data. This ensures that these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the

objectives of the research). The final purpose of inductive analysis is to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data. These reasons align with Scriven's description of "goal-free evaluation" (1991, p. 56) whereby evaluators wish to describe the actual program effects. For these reasons an inductive approach is well suited to this study.

My analysis uses open coding, the process used by the grounded theorist "... to form initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied" (Cresswell, 2008, p. 643). From a range of coding approaches proposed by Bogdan and Taylor the option of *perspectives held by subject* is well suited to this case study, because it uses codes "oriented towards the ways of thinking subjects share, e.g. rules, norms, points of view" (2007, p. 153). This subject-oriented approach accommodates the varied responses of the participants in a focus group, incorporating the specific language they use, and their underlying comments about teaching and learning practices.

Language is a limitation in making sense of this study's focus group interview transcripts and individual questionnaires. The responses are recorded in both Arabic and English, a second language for all the participants except the researcher. It is notable that a number of English words are used repeatedly by the participants in the focus group interviews. Because of their limited English vocabulary, and that of the translator, it is possible that there is some replication of words and phrases to explain quite different concepts and terms. In their first language they may have used a wider variety of words to express subtle, or even, substantial variances when describing their experience. While on the one hand language limitations will constrain the communication, on the other hand perhaps the participants articulated their experience more concisely and in a focused way by being constrained to use a narrow range of words in English to articulate it.

To address the issue of the participants' limited English language I invited the International Student Advisor to check the translations and confirm their accuracy. He was able to clarify the meaning of some of the Arabic words and phrases used in the focus group interviews, and to provide some alternative English words for some parts of the transcripts to those used by the translator. As an analyser I have no choice but to accept that even if the available vocabulary and skill with English language limits the participants' intent and my understanding of their meanings, I must trust that the main concepts underlying their comments will still emerge.

## Thematic analysis

This section describes the major themes that emerge from the raw data, namely:

1. *Language focus* – the higher priority afforded to learning the English language, rather than Adult Education,
2. *Boredom issues* – The role of the teacher in supporting student engagement and dealing with boredom,
3. *Practical versus theory* - Expectations of the Adult Education curriculum,
4. *New approaches* – a desire to learning about new approaches to teaching and learning.

Two minor themes also emerged, namely:

5. *Learning Environment Context* – the differences between the New Zealand and Saudi Arabian learning environments,
6. *Ambience* - the effect of the atmosphere created by the teacher on learning.

(Note: In the following section I will use quotes to illustrate the origins of each theme and predominately these are taken from the focus group interviews. Italics have been added to some participants' quotes for clarity and emphasis).

*Theme 1 – Language.* A higher priority afforded to learning about the English language, rather than Adult Education, sets the context for the learner teachers' experience in Aotearoa New Zealand. Language development is paramount amongst the reasons the learner teachers undertake their ISTE. The Adult Education section of the course is very much a third-placed priority for these participants during their semester break from Saudi Arabia, with the computer studies segment at CPIT ranked second. For example, they reported “[We] come here to learning English”, and “the main thing is the English language”.

In fact, English was identified by some participants at the end of their time as the one thing they *most enjoy learning about* while in Aotearoa New Zealand, underlining this point in the written questionnaire with statements like, “only English language”, and “the study of the English language”. There are sound reasons for the participants to learn English, many of them essentially to further their careers and address industrial needs. The participants explain that English is the lingua franca internationally of computing practice and, ipso facto, required for the teaching of computing too: “In Saudi Arabia colleges only use terms in English to teach computer studies, universities use all English to teach computer studies”, and “the computer accepts mainly English



input from the students, and most of the terms used ... are in English (motherboard, hard disks) ...". To be able to work in the global petrochemical and other industries with foreign nationals requires English; they say "English language is important in Saudi Arabia so you can get a good job". This is part of the larger process of globalisation, and the emergence of the global village (Toffler, 1974), in which multi-national organisations employ English language and Western cultural approaches when doing business. "International markets also demand that workers understand the cultures of other countries in order to communicate effectively as they travel and make important decisions regarding these countries" (Diamond & Moore, 1995, p. 4). Understandably, the wider purpose for spending time in New Zealand, namely learning English, is afforded a priority well ahead of improving the participants' teaching skills.

*Theme 2 – Boredom issues.* The role of the teacher in supporting student engagement (or their students' lack thereof) and finding ways to address boredom issues, emerged as a concern for the learner teachers. The participants see the problem of 'boredom' as something students are forced to endure, but equally one which they would like to allieviate. They see this as related to the role of the tutor, particularly when lecturing. The relationship between learner and teacher intersects with what they describe as 'student behaviour' and these concern the participants, who desire "to understand the behaviour of the people we are teaching" and "how to deal with the adult - very important issue - how to handle their behaviour". They seek strategies to 'manage' students who are said to be 'bored', they search for "how to manage the lecture rooms and the activities we used in teaching methods", particularly a class with more than 50 students. For example, "in the Adult Education course we took mainly theoretical and not practical side and not how to manage class with large number of students". I think the term 'manage' refers to the complex skills a teacher must employ when supporting learners, such as giving instructions, asking questions, designing and grading assessment, providing pastoral support, logistics, observing attendance and work in progress, and monitoring the progress of students undertaking a course of study.

To make sense of the theme of boredom issues and student engagement it is important to investigate the roles the teacher plays in Saudi Arabia, including the approach of the ISTE to the learner teachers, namely "the way the teacher [of the Saudi Arabian teachers themselves] deals with students" is said to hinder their learning. The participants alluded to the deep cultural capital that applies to their vocation in their homeland, which is based on a deep respect for, even fear of, the teacher. The context of the student-teacher relationship in each country is quite different; they say, "[NZ?] teachers are like your brother or sister", whereas "there is too much respect for

teachers in Arabic countries and it's nearly impossible to argue with a teacher there regarding test results".

The International Student Advisor explained to me, after the issue of managing student behaviour was identified in the focus group interviews, that the long-established perspective in the Arab world is that the teacher must have a firm hand, and could not afford to relax his (sic) strict control as a teacher, or the students would lose respect for him and walk all over him. He gave an example of himself as a boy playing football in the street; if he saw his teacher he would run and hide rather than be seen by him because he would have demanded "why are you not in your house studying?" Then the next day he would have made his life miserable in class.

One example in the data that illustrated the different approach to the role of the teacher is summarised in an assessment issue, which revealed participants' difficulty reconciling quite different educational world-views, specifically peer evaluation. "In the English class they asked me to evaluate our peers. But I have no experience in how to evaluate each other, because I have not done that before". In the Middle East it is the teacher's role to assess work, not a student's peers, which is acceptable in some New Zealand settings;

Evaluating each other is not normally done in Saudi. Except for my subject [architecture], but even so it's difficult to separate the person from the project! He takes it personally. Not a cultural habit. Even though the Holy Koran has a big statement to correct each other, this is not normally done. (International Student Advisor, personal communication, 23 September 2009).

Revising their views of the roles of the teacher was reported by some participants as a significant thing they learned in Aotearoa New Zealand about teaching, citing a change in attitude from a more didactic model to one built on a less distant relationship between teacher and student. They describe "removing the barriers between the student and the teacher" and "involving students in the teaching process". A more student-centred approach is described, in which the learner is engaged through activities requiring their own efforts, such as inquiry-based learning approaches, with the teacher in the role I would describe as a guide on the side rather than a sage on the stage.

The participants not only recognize the problem of boredom for their own learners, but also for themselves during lessons, saying "... the lecture took a long time, which was boring". They were identifying the issue from both perspectives through their own experience as a learner and as a teacher.

Repeated references to 'managing' 'student behaviour' in this theme in the data invites questions about the student-teacher relationship and what should comprise the content of this aspect of an in-service course for learner teachers. The participants want to discover ways to

respond to the boredom and lack of engagement by their own learners, and seek answers during their experience in New Zealand. To what degree were these and other expectations met?

*Theme 3 – Practical versus theory.* Expectancies about the way the Adult Education curriculum was designed and delivered emerges as a clear theme from the data. In particular, a view about the lack of *practical* delivery is stated by the learner teachers about the Adult Education section of the course. The perception that there was insufficient ‘practical’ delivery was specifically identified in the second focus group, conducted on the final day of the course, as a reason for dissatisfaction with the curriculum, saying “we want some more practical lectures”, and “the problem is there is no application/practical so they take us to lectures and show us how they teach/explain. We need more visits to a school with large classes”.

Before embarking on the course the participants expected to learn what they describe as ‘practical’ activities and indicated their preference for what they called ‘practical’ learning, over ‘theoretical’. The latter they are disparaging towards and say they have difficulty making sense of it, for example, “The excessive theoretical learning hinders the learning progress ... *practical* learning makes it easier for the students to learn”. After the course, when asked about improvements, one says, “the theory is a lot”. One participant summarised their experience of the course after it had finished, as “.... we came here we don’t know – they explain to us [*few theory thing?* – audio indistinct] I personally didn’t understand anything”.

One explanation for the learner teachers’ persistent use of the word ‘practical’ to describe delivery of the programme could be a reference to such pedagogical approaches as *applied* or *active learning*, in contrast to a teacher-centred, lecture-based model, particularly when exploring abstract or theoretical content. This notion was stated clearly in the first focus group, held before they had begun their studies in Adult Education, saying “when we are learning it theoretically and we practice it as well we will learn better”, and “... *practical* is good for the person than theory, theory can forget tomorrow or after, but *practical* not”. The word ‘practical’ may refer not only the learner teachers’ preferred way of learning, and their declared lack of experience of it in the Adult Education segment of their ISTE, but also may refer to their own students’ preferred way of learning. Also, the comments must be seen in the context of teachers of computing science, the demands of that particular discipline, and views of how it is best learned. The comments sit within the context of learning about the teaching of students of computing and the experience of the learner teachers, who bring perceptions of how they believe learning about computing is best achieved in their own environment. It invites questions about the nature of learning practical subjects and of practical ways of learning theoretical aspects of a subject such as computer studies.

In addition to 'practical' the participants also regularly use the word 'activities', which I suggest means teaching methods and strategies used in their ISTE, as well as how they teach their own learners. When asked in the questionnaire to think about themselves as a teacher, the participants report that the main thing they have learned in New Zealand about teaching includes "approaches of learning and activities", and "how to create different activities in the class". In fact, "more activities in the class" is identified by one participant as the thing he most enjoyed learning about while in Aotearoa New Zealand, adding "I think which very important we learn more about *activities* and how can we make activities inside our lecture", and another says "I didn't take any course for adult education before, that means I am happy to take this course, and I learn more about *activities* and learning approach". In a final reflection it is noted that "in adult teaching we learned how to create different *activities* in the class ... other ways or methods needed to be able to teach the Saudi adults, other than Powerpoint". In short, the participants' main expectations were to learn in a practical way themselves, and also to discover ways to create practical activities for their own classes, which marries with a search for new teaching approaches.

*Theme 4 – New approaches.* New approaches to teaching and learning is a further theme arising from the data. Some new approaches were discovered through their own experience as learners in New Zealand, such as small group or co-operative learning. The participants describe their experience as learners of English at CPIT, saying "I enjoyed the English language. It was *new* for us, the way of teaching it – small group". In response to a probing question asked by the translator, "if Adult Education was being taught like English course will that make it better?" a participant says, "we enjoyed it because it was new for us; new practices. Enjoyed small group of teaching, not like in Saudi Arabia (40-50 students). However, the lecture took a long time, which was boring". Another says,

I think I enjoyed because I didn't take this activities before, really I hope I will apply it in my course when I go back in my Saudi Arabia college, I think it will help me to make the lectures up better than before because some students after 1 hour or 45 minutes they go to sleep.

After experiencing first hand, "the method of teaching the students how to find and research information on their own" and, "let student to search for information and learn themselves", the participants provide an example of a new approach. This approach may be described as inquiry-based or problem-based learning. This method is novel for the participants, who affirmed its value, perhaps because it contrasts with the didactic model of teaching common in Arab education.

Another new teaching technique noted by one participant links to a word commonly used: 'explain'. He states that he has learned to "never *explain* the lesson to the students while they are writing off the board, but the lesson should be *explained* to the students while they are concentrating". This term is also used elsewhere by other participants, for example when they say "... let us explain lectures more than one time"; "... explaining of the subjects and finding solutions to them", and "... they didn't explain to us how to prepare the lesson plan, how to plan subject / study materials". I think the term explain indicates the processes in which a teacher helps deconstruct concepts, adds new information, connects learners' findings to the wider perspectives of the discipline (as in project-based learning), and illuminates the subject with relevant theory. In summary, explaining describes the practice of helping learners to construct new meaning, and is one more example of the core interest by the participants to discover novel teaching methods.

The two minor themes identified from the data include, firstly, the different learning environment contexts, such as large versus small groups of learners, and secondly, the effect of the ambience of the teaching environment.

*Theme 5 – Learning Environment Context.* Differences between the New Zealand and Saudi Arabian learning environment contexts emerged from the data. The participants contrast class sizes at CPIT - typically fewer than 20 – with those where they tutor 35–100 adults, saying the methods introduced in the Adult Education course "... apply to a classroom of low number of students, but in Saudi Arabia we have high number", therefore unfortunately "what we learned can't be taught in Saudi Arabia, it can be applied on small number of students [only]". I think these comments imply that there are different demands on learners and teachers in a lecture theatre – perhaps limited physical movement - which require different methods of teaching. The size of classes impose a challenge for the learner teachers, who perceive a disjoint between the teaching approaches used for small and large groups, and they have an expectation that the Adult Education course will provide better ways to teach large groups. The participants distinguish between the context and constraints under which they normally teach and the small groups they witness in New Zealand, and in their view the course did not address these issues well enough, saying "we did take benefit of this in adult education course .... [however] we need more visits to a school with large classes. More beneficial to us ... we can see how the teacher can give the students information and what is the advantage and disadvantage of this". Also,

I think we can make [use] some activities, such as some questions; in small class we can implement all [activities] but in large class maybe a few.

The problem was [I] didn't know exactly the perfect approach to manage the class with more than 50 students.

I think these remarks apply especially to teaching the theoretical concepts of computing to large groups, rather than the practical hands-on instruction when teaching students in the lab, which could involve smaller numbers of learners. When asked how they currently teach theory versus practical computing, participants explain that depending on the subject being taught, such as the prescribed Cisco Networking Academy course, they are required to complete 50 or more Powerpoint slides in maybe one and a half hours, so there would be no time normally to break for lab work.

There are several issues that might be addressed when considering large group teaching, acknowledging the practical difficulties they can pose and finding, within their reality constraints, possible ways to help learning to occur within this context. This links to the previous theme of the role of the teacher in improving student engagement, and provides a stepping off point for finding common areas of understanding between the ISTE and the learner teachers, both seeking ways to improve teaching and learning.

In this theme of the learning environment context the hours of learning are described as different in each country. The challenge for these learner teachers is how to maintain their own as well as their students' engagement during classes which run non-stop 8am to 2pm (except in the holy month of Ramadan when it's 9am to 3 pm), while "in New Zealand there is a one hour break but in Saudi Arabia there is no break during class". Although not often referred to in cultural studies, the clock can have a strong cultural influence in shaping of behaviour of groups of people. This creates another tension within the experience of the participants on the Adult Education course, which they perceived did not acknowledge the differences between New Zealand and Saudi Arabian circumstances and the constraints under which they teach.

*Theme 6 – Ambience.* The ambience or what is described as the 'mood' of the environment established by the behaviour of the kiwi teachers is experienced by the participants as an alternative way of approaching learning, which they regarded positively. The effect of the atmosphere created by the teachers in New Zealand on learning is noteworthy for the participants, saying, "there are fun, exciting methods of teaching in NZ", and "NZ it is take it easy ... in a relaxed manner", and "the English lesson have a break and a more relaxed environment". Participants were positively disposed to the use of humour, which suggests a less formal relationship and which may be connected to the role of the teacher.

They teach here in a friendly way and they entertain you (joke), not like they are teaching. We don't use this way of teaching in our country.

We learn more about ... [how to] make it sometimes fun and sometimes to give the student wake up after 10 or 15 minutes.

The participants saw merit in the relaxed style of teaching practice and its potential impact on learning. One observation was that "...depending on the mood of the teachers if they are not in a bright cheerful mood, the learning of the students will greatly decrease". No doubt mood and ambience are highly subjective terms and may imply a range of states and conditions that affect learning. It is clear that the participants see a link between the teacher and their effect on the learning process, within this range of states. I think the mood of the teacher and learner may be culturally situated.

When viewing the comments overall, it is worth noting a complicating factor associated with the nature of all teacher professional development (PD). The participants are at the same time actively engaged as learners themselves, while also holding onto their identity as teachers. The contexts for learning are different, yet the same individuals are present, both as learners and as teachers. These two states can create disjoints, some of which may have been exposed in the themes identified, while at the same time provide rich ground for nurturing new thinking. There is the possibility of transferring their own learning into a different context, by applying it as teachers working with their own learners.

Looking back at these six themes from the focus groups, together they suggest tensions arising from some cross-purposes between the expectations and priorities of the learner teachers and the approaches taken by the NZTs during their ISTE. The differing views formed a disjoint and lead to disincentives to embrace the new ways of learning. However, the themes also indicate some congruence between the aspirations of the learner teachers and the ISTE in regard to intended outcomes, for example, the role of the teacher in improving student engagement, exploring new teaching approaches, and creating a suitable ambience to support learning.

### **Participants' suggestions to improve the Adult Education course**

This section of the chapter describes the recommendations the participants made for improvements to the Adult Education course for similar learner teachers in the future. The participants' quotes in this section are taken mostly from the questionnaire, completed in writing individually by the learner teachers at the end of their stay, immediately after the Adult Education segment of the ISTE had been completed. There is less detail in the written responses than in the verbal ones captured by the focus group interviews. These comments are included because at

least one-third of all the participants made reference to them, although one limitation is that it is not clear from the data that these suggestions carry equal weight among all the participants. The suggestions fall into three categories; namely, to have more time to explore Adult Education, to gain more feedback on their practice, especially through more 'practical' learning and observing local practitioners, and lastly, allowing more input into the design of the curriculum at the outset of a future course.

Participants suggest more *time* on the Adult Education segment of their ISTE in New Zealand, saying for example, "Time. There should be enough time for the teacher to improve himself." This would allow them to experience a more hands-on skills-based improvement in their own practice as teachers, including "more practical lessons" and "paying more attention to the practical side".

There is a clear desire for more *feedback* to improve the learner teachers' practice, both in delivering it to their students and receiving it as learners themselves. When describing something they had done in the course that has helped their learning and understanding of Adult Education, responses include "how to take the feedback in different ways", and "use feedback to know if students understand the lecture or not." It appears that the participants mean comments by the teacher about their own teaching practice, although it may be provided by the teacher, peers or through self-evaluation against relevant criteria. Providing learners with feedback is a vital ingredient in learning and often a most valuable investment in time during a course of study. It is so important to at least one participant that he elevates it to the most worthwhile outcome of the course, saying "feedback was only useful thing and [the subject was taught] only 2 or 3 days a week", while another recommends "repeated feedback at the end", saying he,

only got one feedback at the end of the course. I prefer there is 3 times of teaching; first time she give your feedback so she correct her problems or mistakes in the next one.

Another proposes,

tell the student to make more than one presentation and at the end of his presentation tell him what are the things he must do improve himself of it and which thing did he make it very well.

Another recommendation endorses the approach of providing more feedback, when the participants suggest less time is spent on what they call 'lecture' and more on 'practical'. They say "cancel the theory part and further activation of the practical part", and "avoid increasing the time of the lecture", and "increase the number of activities in adults teaching".

Complementing these views of practical experience and feedback is a suggestion to provide a chance to *observe* practitioners in a New Zealand setting similar to their own,



specifically, “we want to attend a lecture of computer so we can observe it, what problems are there in teaching and sharing solutions to teaching of solutions”. This suggestion specifies a desire by the visitors while in an unfamiliar educational setting to experience different models of practice, and to have learning conversations with colleagues from a similar content discipline.

Gathering *input* from the learner teachers at the outset is recommended by the participants to identify their needs/problems as teachers in Saudi Arabia, so that their needs are assessed. For example, they say, “let us explain lectures more than one time”, which I think means they wanted to introduce the ISTE to the context from which they come. They advocate “questioning the teachers on the problems they face during explaining of the subjects and finding solutions to them”. This approach they say would lead to “finding solutions to the teaching problems that face the teachers”, and to “focus on the needs of the Saudi teacher”.

Finally, in making suggestions for improving the Adult Education course, the participants identify one particular tool of teaching, namely an understanding of the educational principles underpinning lesson design. One says,

... but they didn't show us how to prepare the subject, every person prepare the subject according to his / her way, some of us even extemporize the subject, [however] they didn't explain to us how to prepare the lesson plan, how to plan subject / study materials.

The principles and practice of learning design and lesson planning referred to by this participant is aligned to earlier comments, especially new ways to create ‘activities’ for teaching and learning.

In summary, the recommendations made for future improvements to the Adult Education course, including more time to explore Adult Education, more feedback, observing local practitioners, and more input into the design of the curriculum, provide rich possibilities and also substantial challenges for the design and delivery of future courses of study of this nature.

### **Valued aspects of the New Zealand experience**

This section of the chapter explores which, if any, New Zealand teaching approaches the learner teachers intend to transfer to their homeland context, and by implication reveals those aspects of the participants’ experience which are strongly valued.

Following their experience in Aotearoa New Zealand, participants were asked the question, “*When you return to Saudi Arabia state one thing that you can change in your ways of teaching?*” (Questionnaire). Despite few responses, they report an adoption of practical teaching methods that had made an impression on them that they say they will use in their teaching, such

as 'brain storming' 'work group' 'tell your partner' 'Q&A' 'think-pair-share' 'small quiz'. They also wrote 'I will use participate (sic) method', and 'choose more learning method like direct – participate – self learning in the same lecture'. They say they will be "implementing some of the activities in some of the lecture rooms", "the use of one or more methods to increase activities", and "apply more activities on my lectures". These seem to reinforce an orientation towards more active learning centred on the student, as opposed to a more teacher-centred didactic approach.

## **Summary**

Using an inductive method of analysis I have identified major themes that emerge from the raw data. These include the priority given to learning the English language, the role of the teacher in student engagement, a desire to learn about new approaches to teaching and learning while in New Zealand, and practical versus theoretical methods. These themes provide some indication of a disjoint caused by prior expectations of the participants and subsequent experience while on the Adult Education segment of the ISTE. The data indicates a perception by the learner teachers that the differences between New Zealand and Saudi Arabian circumstances, and the constraints under which they teach, were not acknowledged during the Adult Education course. Participants referred to the different learning environment contexts between New Zealand and Saudi Arabia and positively commented on the effect of the ambience of the teaching environment.

The comments arise from their experiences both as a learner and as a teacher; the participants aspire to learn in a practical way themselves, and also to discover ways to create practical activities for their own classes, which marries with a search for new teaching approaches. The data invites questions about the student-teacher relationship and what should comprise the content of an in-service course for learner teachers. It provides rich ground for nurturing new thinking, in particular more culturally responsive ways of teaching of learner teachers, and implications for future practice when providing ISTE to international students. The tensions and implications that arise from the data are explored in the following chapter.

## Chapter 6 – Discussion and implications

In this chapter I respond to the research questions, How do Saudi Arabian teachers of adult learners experience learning about teaching from New Zealand teacher educators? and, what teaching approaches, if any, in the course on teaching adults do the participants expect will be useful to them as teachers when they return to their homeland setting?

I discuss in detail each of the findings reported in the thematic analysis which are described as tensions in this case study. I also examine the factors that lead to tensions experienced by the SATs, then I discuss possible responses to them. Finally I discuss implications that arise from this case study; for curriculum, for relationships, engagement issues, and I propose a model based on deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching.

### **Valued teaching approaches from the Adult Education segment of the ISTE**

The responses to the question *“When you return to Saudi Arabia state one thing that you can change in your ways of teaching?”* reveal those aspects of the experience of participants in this case study which are strongly valued, and are likely to influence their future behaviour. It is significant that practical teaching methods made an impression on the SATs, and indicate a new orientation towards more active learning approaches centred on the student (Boud & Prosser, 2002; J. S Bruner, 2006; Fink, 2003; Knowles, 1980; Kolb, 1984; Prosser & Trigwell, 2006; P. Race, 2010; Vygotsky et al., 2004; Watkins, 2003), as opposed to traditional teacher-centred approaches. The term “active learning” was specifically used by one participant when describing something they had done in the course that has helped his learning and understanding of Adult Education which would be taken home. In addition, participants indicate things they discovered through their own experience as English language learners, citing small group work and noting the effect of ambience, or what they call a relaxed ‘mood’ in the learning environment. They were positively disposed to the less formal, humorous approaches to their role demonstrated by kiwi teachers, compared to those in Saudi Arabia. There is deep cultural capital that applies to the teaching vocation in their homeland, which is based on a respect for, even fear of, the teacher. The contrasting approach towards learners modelled by teachers that these SATs identified, provides an important insight into their experience in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **Tensions associated with participants’ dissatisfaction**

As well as affirming aspects of their experience, the SATs also identified their dissatisfaction with some aspects of the Adult Education segment of their ISTE. Four broad

tensions may be linked to the underlying dissatisfaction; firstly, the participants focus on learning English as the main purpose for their study in New Zealand rather than Adult Education; secondly, a desire to learn about ways to deal with boredom and management issues for their students was unfulfilled. Thirdly, the SATs' pedagogical paradigms and their prior expectations about the curriculum differed from the teaching approaches they experienced in the programme; and lastly, the participants say that their learning contexts were not acknowledged. These different orientations to ISTE are problematic.

### ***Tension 1 – English language priority***

The participants are faced with a dilemma upon their arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand, regarding how much time or energy during their visit, if any, they wish to commit to the Adult Education segment of the ISTE prepared for them. They state clearly that the main purpose was to improve their English language capability. To undertake upskilling in teaching holds a much lower priority for them. Perhaps for some it holds no appeal at all. The participants describe a gap between their expectations on arrival and the previously arranged course content. There are good reasons they afford a higher priority to learning the English language, while their motives for improving teaching are likely to be torn at best, except where the learning to improve their teaching skills might intersect with an improvement in their English reading, writing, speaking or listening skills. Apart from English language it is likely that a majority would be interested in learning more about computing studies, according to a survey of American teachers, which reported 59 percent of participants found content-related PD useful. However fewer than half surveyed found PD on non-content-related areas useful, which in this case would be the Adult Education segment of their ISTE (Andree, Wei, Darling-Hammond, Orphanos, & Richardson, 2009). Of course, independent of whatever content was studied, the learning context was notably different from those in which the arriving group of SATs usually teach. The new context is likely to have caused dissonance, even assuming they were ready, willing and able to undertake some PD in Adult Education.

The NZT was likely to experience tensions too, resulting from many of the same issues. She had not been involved in the conversations about the purpose and design of the curriculum, where it connected with the wider PD goals of the home institutions from whence the SATs came, and given input into whether or not the time allocated would ensure the intended outcomes could be met. As it transpired, the occurrence of this course was reduced from ten to eight weeks largely because of timing of Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, in 2009. This important religious season meant a truncated delivery of the ISTE programme, which already comprised significantly less than one-third of the time the cohort was visiting New Zealand. If the normal

time allocated to the Adult Education segment of course the ISTE programme was available it would have allowed completion of some aspects of the curriculum that had to be dropped.

A reluctance to undertake teacher education invites the question as to why the Adult Education topic was included in the curriculum for ISTE in the first place. Various stakeholders, such as the Saudi Arabian government, the educational broker Polytechnics International New Zealand Limited (PINZ) and CPIT, had decided in advance of the arrival of the cohort of SATs that there was merit in including teaching skills and practices, course design and assessment. These stakeholders presumably aimed to improve the quality of educational delivery in Saudi Arabia through exposure to Western models, studying computing science and English language, along with Western teaching and learning approaches while in Aotearoa New Zealand. An Adult Education curriculum was created by the NZT based on one designed for New Zealand teachers in the ITP sector.

Effective professional development requires a number of elements to be in place; including, making the PD part of an institution's continuous improvement practices. This means linking it to a broad plan of effective ongoing improvement of practice – in this case teaching - involving the staff themselves in needs analysis of the professional upskilling, how these needs might be met, supplying ongoing mentoring during and after the formal learning, and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the programme of improvement afterwards. Ideally, in-service teacher PD will have a focus on school (and student) needs rather than addressing individual needs; and have a requirement for participation or accountability for outcomes, rather than allow staff to 'opt-out' (Wenmouth, 2012). At the same time, a teacher PD programme that is integrated with a system for evaluating teachers' strengths and areas for improvement can provide a serious boost to teacher performance and student outcomes. A survey of international studies suggests that effective ISTE needs to include several elements. It must base the programme on a vision of effective teaching, segment teachers according to subject discipline or experience, deliver the PD strategically in line with institutional objectives, make coaching the centerpiece of PD, and move from 'push' to 'pull', so that teachers get what they want, when they want it (McKinsey & Company, 2012). The pull approach puts the power to improve in the teacher's hands, because "teachers will be more invested in PD programs that they have chosen for themselves" (ibid, p. 10). Further, awareness on the part of the participants of a need to build their skills is essential, along with a commitment to improve. It would appear that many of these elements were not in place for the SATs in this case study, resulting in a tension for them. The lack of any of these elements would undermine the potential improvement anticipated by those who invested in the PD plan.

There needs to be agreement on the part of both the teacher and the learners on how to achieve the outcomes of any course of study. In this case study, the NZT inherited the task of leading a group of unwilling students through a course, with insufficient time, and a lack of clarity and shared understanding about the kind of learning outcomes and goals the learners would achieve at the end. On the part of learners, the outcomes of their study must be clear to them, they must have the desire to achieve them, and intend to put in the required effort to meet the goals. Successful learning requires trust between both the learner and the teacher. The learner must trust that the teacher has the same learning outcomes as they do, has the best interest of the learner at heart in the meeting the goals, and has identified the best the ways to achieve them. It is common in a course of study to have agreement among all parties over the graduate profile of the learner at the end of the course of study. Race points out that “‘teaching’ at any level can surely be summarised as a purposeful attempt to cause learning to happen by those being taught” (2010, p. 3). It is not clear in this case whether or not, for these SATs, these requirements were present sufficiently to ensure the success of the Adult Education segment of the ISTE.

Language is culture expressing itself in sound. Apart from the dilemma faced by the SATs about the priority they give to learning English language over improving their teaching skills, the difficulties of making sense of the terminology associated with the scholarship of teaching and learning were found to be problematic. If speakers of English as a first language find some of the jargon commonly used in educational theory challenging, how much more so will it be for speakers of English as a second language? Any confusion over new and possibly difficult terminology used in Western views and theories of education, overlaid with a reluctance to learn the subject, would create tensions for the participants on this course of study. Additionally, there are culturally embedded worldviews associated with our choice of language, which is a source of our identity growing up, “an identity that will always define us as a member of a sociocultural family” (Merriam, 2007, p. 7). Therefore, English language terminology used to express Western educational theories simultaneously provides SATs a window into Western educational paradigms. These may or may not lead the participants in this case study to adopt new ways to teach computing studies on their return home.

The underlying purpose that Saudi Arabian teachers choose to travel across the world to a Western cultural and educational setting is to improve their English language capability, primarily through a programme of formal language tuition at CPIT, and also by immersion in an English speaking culture. The desire to learn English is strong and there are overwhelming reasons for

these and other SATs to learn English. It is claimed that about one billion students are learning English worldwide (Crystal, 2003). In 2003 the Saudi Ministry of Education passed a law that mandates the teaching of English in public schools starting from Grade 6 (Al-Jarf, 2008). Al-Jarf's study of 470 female college students at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which explored their attitudes towards using English and Arabic as a medium of instruction at the university level, found 96 percent of the participants considered English a superior language. Their reasons ranged from English being an international language, to the language of science and technology, research, electronic databases and technical terminology. They believe that it is impossible to teach information technology (IT) in Arabic, because "they cannot work with the computer in Arabic" (Al-Jarf, 2008, p. 200).

In response to the desire to learn English the NZT, faced with addressing low motivation for the Adult Education segment of the ISTE, could reduce the dilemma for the SATs by linking learning about teaching with improving English skills. The Saudi teachers' strong desire to learn English could be leveraged to encourage using English while learning about teaching. Ideally practising speaking, listening, reading and writing skills would help engage them in the Adult Education topics. However, there is a risk this would amplify any language limitations, because the scholarship of learning and teaching can be a challenging discipline, especially when wrestling with theoretical concepts, which are often difficult to articulate in any language. To ameliorate the risk of finding English too difficult to describe educational theories, Darder says "bicultural students must find opportunities to engage in classroom dialogues and activities that permit them to explore the meaning of their lived experiences through the familiarity of their own language" (Darder, 1991, p. 103).

As well as language, sometimes international students – such as these SATs - choose behaviours that are different from those expected of adult learners in their host country. Examples might include unexplained lateness or absence from classes, lack of apparent commitment to the course of study, reluctance to join in some learning activities, and dissatisfaction with the curriculum, not voicing dissatisfaction out of respect for the role of the teacher, and an exclusive focus on summative assessment. Although by no means unique to international students, these and other behaviours are easily attributed to cultural difference, whether or not this is valid. A lack of understanding about behaviours can create tension for the learner, the teacher and others in the class. When international students enrol in higher education in another country, their very presence requires building up "intercultural communicative competence" (Byram, 1997, p. 3) within the institution, its staff, and among local and international students. In this case, lack of understanding of the context from which the

visiting teachers came, and of their needs, appears to have compounded the tensions for the NZT and impacted on the SATs. This helps explain why the participants in this case study advocate “questioning the teachers on the problems they face during explaining of the subjects and finding solutions to them”. This approach they say would lead to “finding solutions to the teaching problems that face the teachers”, and to “focus on the needs of the Saudi teacher”.

### ***Tension 2 – Boredom issues***

The second tension relates to SATs ongoing difficulties with lack of engagement by their own students, and a desire to find ways to address this. They repeatedly use the term ‘boredom’ to describe the experience of their students, particularly during their lectures. The word boredom was inferred to mean a lack of student engagement, a condition which the SATs would like to alleviate. Boredom issues are often repressed anger, born of frustration and a lack of being unable to control one’s own circumstances, which in turn leads to stress. Not unsurprisingly, given the low priority and mixed attitudes towards learning about Adult Education while in New Zealand, these teachers themselves felt bored and disengaged from the course of study to which they were assigned by external stakeholders. They say they found parts of the Adult Education segment of the ISTE “boring”, echoing the sentiments of their own students. Such a sentiment would create tension as well for the NZT, as for any teacher whose students appear to be, and/or report being bored.

The role of the teacher in student engagement (or lack thereof) intersects with what the participants describe as ‘student behaviour’. The way the teacher engages with their learners helps set the tone for the ensuing learning experiences. By the nature of the imbalance of power between the learner and the teacher, who is usually also the learner’s assessor, the relationship is at once complex and demanding for any teacher. The difficult dance of nurturing a desire to learn, providing instruction, and indicating the behaviours expected of expert learners in the particular educational context, superimposed with varied cultural expectations and behaviours, is not one mastered easily. The added dimension of whether or not the student is an adult or a younger person can create further tension in supporting learners. Overlaid with these issues can be differing cultural views of the roles of the teacher, and these compound the tensions for both the learner and the teacher.

The roles of the teacher in the Saudi Arabian context are decidedly different to that in Aotearoa New Zealand. The teaching roles echo Arab religious, cultural and educational traditions, which vary significantly from a modern Western worldview. Based on their prior experience as students, SATs are likely to see the teacher as the expert who tells them what they



are required to know. The heart of the Arab teaching approach is that the teacher is the fount of knowledge who imparts received wisdom to students, who should not question their superiors. As one participant stated, “the teaching standard in Saudi Arabia and Arab countries [is] the teacher says, and the students just do. As being said in English – ‘spoonfeeding’”. Or in the words of this research study’s translator, “basically the New Zealand student knows how to do his own research; the Arabic student they make him memorize everything so will be problem at the end” (personal communication 11 August 2009). This kind of rote learning without understanding is “too often practised in Islam and across Asia ... [although] there is no consistent support for rote learning” (Feng et al., 2009, p. 162).

Culture shock may provide one of explanation for the visiting SATs description of themselves as being bored during the Adult Education segment of their ISTE. While being immersed in the foreign life of Christchurch each individual’s experience would be different, possibly including some aspects of the U-curve continuum from culture surprise, to culture stress, to irritation and culture fatigue caused by stimulus overload, followed by culture shock (Lysgaard, 1955). Boredom may be present in any of these stages, and could be one of many factors affecting their well-being and attitude to ISTE.

Adult learners are often more focused on achieving their learning goals than younger students. Time is a more precious commodity to an adult learner. They bring with them more life experience and prior knowledge, which can be used to support the creating of new knowledge and making meaning of the content related to a topic. These realities offer an opportunity for exposing SATs to new ways to manage the learning environment, and overcoming some of the boredom issues that learners experience. Good practices for responding to student behaviours that are not conducive to learning, and ways to address lack of student engagement, are often discovered through the modelling by the NZT. However, if the SAT is not well disposed to the advanced knowledge and experience of the NZT and/or cannot make sense of their teaching approaches, this may thwart the possibilities of improving their own practice and create tension and perhaps boredom. The learner – in this case each adult SAT - needs to be open to fresh teaching approaches, and also able to embrace what can appear to be alien notions.

Cultural differences lead to very different views on the way the learner/teacher relationship is played out. In this case study the NZT had very little prior knowledge of the Arab view of the roles of the teacher, which are notably dissimilar to a Western one. The SATs, who may have only experienced educational life in all-male Arab settings, hail from ten different all-male technical institutes in which they face often reluctant Saudi Arabian students, who must

attend lectures and may only leave school when parental permission is granted. Inevitably the interpretation on how best to respond to disengaged student behaviour and boredom issues will be worlds apart for a NZT who models a teaching approach which seeks to consult and engage with learners. The NZT would challenge previous views of the roles of the teacher. It would open up in the minds of the SATs another way to relate to their students used to rote learning approaches. This may be welcomed by an Arab SAT or create tension. Either way, experiencing a different model of the roles of the teacher would create in the SATs a dilemma about whether or not to embrace new teaching approaches, particularly when they return to their home country.

The picture of the teacher's roles in the Middle Eastern context is complex. "The three main methods of socialisation in Arab society are verbal methods, punishment and very little room for experimentation" (Walker, 2004, p. 436). These methods live alongside and are intertwined with cultural and religious influences. An Islamic worldview sees aims and objectives of education in the context of the relationship between God, Man and Nature, as described and unanimously accepted by Muslim scholars at the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Makkah in 1977:

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of Man through the training of Man's spirit, his intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily senses. Education should therefore cater for the growth of man in all its aspects, spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively, and motivate all these aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection (Ashraf, 1985, p. 26).

The complexity of Islamic and Arab worldviews of the teacher/learner relationship are a challenge for an NZT with a very different view of education. Many Western educational approaches are likely to be alien to those raised in a Middle Eastern educational context that favours a more deductive approach. A Western approach to learning involves asking students to think and express themselves independently of the teacher and promotes meta-cognitive skills and social constructivist approaches (such as small group co-operative learning and social constructivist theory). This poses a challenge to those immersed in a culture that accepts a different *power distance*, which Hofstede describes as "the extent to which the less powerful members of organisations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unevenly" (Hofstede, 2001, p. xix-xx). Smith discovered when teaching staff in the UAE that "the influence of power distance can affect interactions within a group, especially small-group activities" (2007, p. 168). Some participants may feel uncomfortable talking openly with someone they deem to be higher or lower in the institutional hierarchy than themselves (L. Smith, 2007, p. 168). If the NZT were to consult students about their learning preferences and using small group teaching approaches to learning, then this may be seen as an affront to power distance perceptions and

may reinforce tensions for Arab SATs. However, despite the dilemma they may pose for international students, Western approaches to the roles of the teacher offer an opportunity for the ISTE to discuss the value of teaching activities that may lead to reduced boredom issues and greater student engagement.

### ***Tension 3 – Practical versus theory***

The SATs' pedagogical paradigms which come from an Arab worldview, and their prior expectations about the curriculum, differed from the teaching approaches they experienced while learners in the Adult Education segment of the ISTE. The participants came with the view that rather than learn what they describe as 'theory', the way to overcome boredom issues is to learn through practical activities. Their views about the best ways to involve students influenced their approach to alternative notions of pedagogy and teaching practice with which they were possibly unfamiliar.

Despite the differences in pedagogical paradigms, however, there is some common ground where the SATs argue for practical activities as a way of learning, which supports another Western notion of *active* learning approaches, that are likely to result in rich learning experiences (Fink, 2003) leading to deep versus surface learning (Marton & Säljö, 1976). For example, some of the skills and ideas some participants reported that they will use in their teaching on their return home from Aotearoa New Zealand, are 'brain storming' 'work group' 'tell your partner' 'Q&A' 'think-pair-share' 'small quiz'. They wrote "I will use participate (sic) method, and choose more learning method like direct – participate – self learning in the same lecture".

Different disciplines warrant different ways of learning and teaching; the nature of the topics being taught in this case study – English language versus teaching skills and computing studies – also require different teaching approaches. The SATs praised the methods used to learn a second language, which they were immersed in during the entire programme. They cite small group work, students investigating their own solutions, and even the mood of the English teachers as positive factors. Yet they do not approve of the teaching approaches taken in the Adult Education segment of their ISTE. Instead, they argue for other methods, such as observing other teachers of computing studies in other schools, and also for more feedback about their own teaching practice. The practicalities of learning their own subjects (teacher training and computing studies) while in a foreign institution, are different from practising reading, writing, speaking and listening. In the latter case, while living in Christchurch they are constantly surrounded by English language and can practice using it both in and out of the classroom. However, while in New Zealand they are not practising teaching large groups of students, nor

teaching computer studies. This invites questions about how to support learning subjects other than English language.

The SATs' preference for including less theory in favour of more practical content in the curriculum creates tensions. It challenges the notion of praxis, which sees theory and practice integrated – and to leave either dimension out would be like rowing with only one oar. A purely practical teaching approach would be at the expense of learning about and experiencing more enduring understanding of pedagogical theories, that may be able to be adapted to different situations later on. However, in the recent past many teacher education programs have been criticised for being overly theoretical and having little connection to practice (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). These tensions provide a dilemma for the NZT. On the one hand the SATs say they expected to learn practical skills and activities; on the other hand the NZT plans a range of teaching approaches that are born out of the Western scholarship of teaching and learning, expecting that from such theory would emerge more effective, ideally deeper, approaches to teaching, which will help address boredom and lack of student engagement, and lead to deeper learning. These approaches are at odds; whereas the SATs are looking for practical responses to teaching challenges they face, the approach taken by the NZT, based on research and experience, says “there are no easy answers, no pre-packaged programs that can fix the uncertainties that teachers encounter every day” (S. Nieto, 2010, p. xii).

Western styles of learning present not only an educational and but also a cultural change for the SATs. International students need guidance when undertaking a Western model of learning. The NZT is a manager of intercultural transition (Palfreyman, 2007, p. 5) and needs to be able to facilitate learning in students with a wide range of values and attitudes, which are often different from their own (L. Smith, 2007, p. 167).

In short, engaging learners who demonstrate that they are experiencing boredom issues poses a challenge to any teacher, including the NZT working with international SATs, as well as Saudi teachers working in their own context. The participants' view that, as a way to overcome boredom, they should engage in practical activities rather than learn theory, reveals different pedagogical paradigms. These perspectives are born out of different learning environment contexts.

#### ***Tension 4 - learning environment contexts.***

In this case study the SATs come from very different cultural and educational milieu to those of Aotearoa New Zealand. In the view of the participants, the Adult Education segment of their ISTE did not acknowledge the context and constraints under which they normally teach, citing

differences, such as the contrast between small group learning they experienced in New Zealand English language classes and the large group lecturing in their home country. While they confirm “we did take benefit of this in adult education course” they describe a misunderstanding between the NZT and themselves over the learning environment contexts, which created tensions. Acknowledging differences in the learning context needs to embrace those educational and cultural issues which are at play.

In considering how a New Zealand learning context might be perceived by visiting Arab students, we can look across the Tasman Sea, to an Australian example. Shen Chen and Hung Wa Sit (2009) interviewed 20 international students at the University of Newcastle, half from South-east Asia and half from the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Iran and Kuwait). The students were asked about their perspectives towards the major teaching strategies commonly used in Australian universities (Killen, 2007), in contrast with those of their home countries, and how they made academic adjustment in a new cultural environment of learning. The study identified that “in terms of adjustment to the new teaching strategies, there is an issue of cultural conflict due to the students’ cultural values from their home countries” (Chen & Sit, 2009, p. 500). We could reasonably ascribe the same findings to a New Zealand context and in particular to this case study.

The participants say that there was no exploring of the SATs’ expectations about the Adult Education segment of their ISTE on arrival, to clarify their aspirations. Looking at the learning context more widely, it is possible that members of a cohort of SATs are just on a travel junket, as tourists rather than sojourners. Language teacher Michael Byram distinguishes between the *tourist* who remains essentially unchanged, and the *sojourner*, who “has the opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others’ conditions” (Byram, 1997, p. 2). Although international students enrol in a course of study at a foreign institution, formal education is not necessarily a major incentive for their travel off-shore. The main four aspects of interaction across frontiers of different countries – knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction - can be acquired through experience and reflection, without the intervention of teachers and educational institutions (Byram, 1997, p. 33). Informal learning which adults engage in on a daily basis is rarely identified as important learning (Merriam, 2007, pp. 5-6). Opportunities may be found by the NZT to recognise such informal experiences as a natural adjunct to the formal learning context and curriculum outcomes. They may provide a vehicle to increasing engagement by the SATs. Whatever the perception in their minds towards the formal learning of their ISTE, presumably these SATs are in New Zealand more as sojourners than as tourists, expecting to learn within a

Western context about Western ways of education, along with the myriad of other meanings they may make of their experience.

An opportunity for acknowledging the learning context arises from a theme that emerged from the data which I have labelled *ambience* - the effect of atmosphere on the learning environment. The participants were favourably disposed to the ways they were taught English language at CPIT and reported a positive attitude to the mood created by the kiwi teachers. The SATs discovered first hand that ambience could be a substantial factor in improving learning outcomes, and seemed disposed to see how it might influence their own learning context. Establishing and maintaining an appropriate ambience in the learning environment is one of the roles of the teacher. It can range from positive to negative, with many shades in between, and may be enhanced depending on the attitudes and behaviours of all those involved in the learning experience. The ambience is influenced by a myriad of factors, including for instance the degree to which the teacher actually likes the learners and/or the work they are undertaking together. It may be influenced by different cultural orientations and adjusted in response to these in a variety of ways. The significance of the impact of the discovery of ambience on the learning environment on the SATs thinking can be tested by whether or not it is identified as a change in practice they would embrace themselves upon their return home. In fact, a desire to employ different 'activities' in the future is identified by participants in the questionnaire, which confirms a new understanding of the effect of atmosphere on the learning environment.

### **Responding to tensions and implications for the ISTE curriculum**

The main tensions that emerge from the data allow insights into the dilemmas of the participants and also suggest places to respond with deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching. Analysing each of these dilemmas provides an opportunity to make meaning of the participants' experience and to explore possible responses to teaching international SATs during their ISTE, and may also assist when designing domestic in-service teaching programmes. Boud and Prosser espouse a framework for high quality learning activities, which is structured around four key areas. These comprise

- engaging learners;
- acknowledging the learning context;
- challenging learners; and
- providing practice (Boud & Prosser, 2002, pp. 240-241).

The four areas of this framework also overlap with the major themes arising from the data that are sources of tension for the participants, and are discussed as responses in this section. They may have implications for future ISTE programmes.

### ***Engaging learners in response to Tension 1: English language priority***

A response to the first tension, that is, the priority to learning English language over learning about Adult Education, can be considered alongside the first element in the framework for high quality learning activities - the need to engage learners. Engaging learners means starting from where learners are, taking into account their prior knowledge and their desires, and building on their expectations (Boud & Prosser 2002). A major reason for the lack of engagement, low motivation and dissatisfaction of some by the SATs arises out of the tension ascribed to the first theme, namely a language focus. The primary interest in learning about the English language arises because English as a medium of instruction is a feature of the entire educational system in their homeland, including Arab universities.

A possible way of engaging the SATs, and addressing their tension from being torn between learning English and Adult Education, could be to spend time focusing on their needs and wants at the start of the course. One focus group interview comment in this case study was, “at the start of the computer programme and the adult education they should have made a survey of the students on the first day of arrival, during orientation, and ask them what subject would be useful for them to learn? Instead, the prepared programme was just delivered.” The input of any learners into prescribing course content and/or delivery might be accommodated early in a course of study, premised on the notion of a student-directed model, and managed within reasonable and achievable parameters.

Consulting with SATs over the curriculum at the start of a course would have advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it could help the SATs describe their own educational context and inform the NZT both of the constraints under which they work as well as their aspirations and expectations. It could provide a vehicle for addressing student engagement issues, and also provide a culturally formative way to build a relationship between the SATs and the NZT. Finding a means of addressing conflicting expectations at the outset of the course could illuminate the concerns of the SATs. Such “cultural dialogue and negotiation may involve various aspects of tertiary learning, including course content, the way it is presented, and also methods of teaching and relating to students” (Palfreyman, 2007, p. 5). On the other hand, a consultative model of building curriculum might create risks, such as the logistics of responding to learner expectations and adjusting the curriculum accordingly, and building up hopes that cannot be

realised. Modifying the prepared content of any curriculum can be difficult because of tight time constraints and limited resources, and could pose logistical difficulties for the institution generally and the NZT in particular, and a conflict with the agreed contract brokered by PINZ between the Saudi Arabian Technical and Vocational Training Corporation and CPIT.

Story-telling is a possible teaching approach for addressing the tensions, lack of motivation and disengagement of learners, and can help to draw out and elucidate pre-course expectations. Listening to stories of highs and lows as a teacher potentially could lead to greater clarity of the learning outcomes for both parties. The personal experience of each participant could be explored, focusing on their roles as a teacher. Asking for a description of the demands placed on a teacher in their learning context could prompt a commitment to the Adult Education segment of their ISTE, as a way to address the issues that arise from such stories. Baskerville (2011) found that sharing personal stories offered sensitivity to students' backgrounds, experiences and differences, privileged student voice, and affirmed respect for individual lived experiences. "Power was shared in a collaborative learning context through genuine dialogue between teachers and students. Through reflection everyone was able to understand more clearly their own cultural experience" (Baskerville, 2011, p. 110). An advantage of personal storytelling is that it reduces the tendency to attribute some traits of a group to an individual, and vice versa. Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) argue against the common approach of assuming that regularities are static, and that general traits of individuals are attributable categorically to ethnic group membership. They suggest that a cultural-historical approach can be used to help move beyond this assumption by focusing researchers' and practitioners' attention on variations in individuals' and groups' histories of engagement in cultural practices, because the variations reside not as traits of individuals or collections of individuals, but as proclivities of people with certain histories of engagement with specific cultural activities. Thus, "individuals' and groups' experience in activities - not their traits - becomes the focus" (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 1). The NZT could employ personal storytelling as a vehicle to achieve a psychological balance between cultural pride and identity on the one hand and appreciation of cultures different from their own on the other (Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2005b, p. 508).

A way to help address their dilemmas and engage the group of SATs could be to discuss with them how learning about ways to improve their teaching practice, in the Adult Education segment of the ISTE, could also double as a means of improving their English language. The benefits and difficulties would need to be explored, explaining that the scholarship of learning and teaching can be a challenging discipline, especially when wrestling with theoretical concepts, which are often difficult to articulate in any language. When discussing educational concepts It



may be effective to allow the SATs to converse firstly in their native tongue, instead of English, then afterwards to use English to make sense of the adult education topics and extend skills, such as vocabulary, grammar and comprehension. It would also introduce a way to acknowledge the learning context in which the SATs operate.

***Acknowledging the learning context in response to Tension 2: Boredom issues and Tension 3: Practical versus theory***

Responses to the second tension, boredom issues, can be considered alongside the next element in the framework for high quality learning activities - acknowledging the learning context. This involves, acknowledging the learning, the context of the learner, the course of which the activity is part, and the sites of application of the knowledge being learned (Boud & Prosser 2002).

A key feature of the SATs learning context relates to dealing with boredom issues – both their own while in New Zealand, and also of their learners in Saudi Arabia. Acknowledging this dilemma within the Adult Education segment of their ISTE, and finding examples of how to build student engagement, offers an opportunity for the NZT to meet the learners in their own learning context. Honesty must be at heart of addressing the difficult subject of boredom, along with a willingness on the part of those involved to discuss it, and a preparedness to act to relieve it. Boredom leads to a resistance to learn, born of a real or perceived lack of control, which can create stress. Without sufficient trust amongst the participants any discussion about boredom issues can be limited, particularly if the one who is experiencing boredom perceives that the factors causing it cannot be removed. The perception of this group of learners that the Adult Education segment of the ISTE did not fully acknowledge the context and constraints under which they normally teach. Perhaps the same might apply with their own students. Essentially there are two options for those affected by boredom issues. Firstly, by following a process of describing the issue, expressing the feelings and thoughts it generates, suggesting ways to address it and/or agreeing to tolerate it, then concluding the discussion in a mature way. Secondly, by distracting the learners who feel bored with powerful, enjoyable and engaging activities, ideally connected with the learning outcomes of the course of study, or at least with some behaviour offering a sufficient reward that the resistance to take part in them can be suspended, despite experiencing boredom.

A process of consultation at the start of the NZT is likely to be helpful to the SATs and to the NZT, and simultaneously offer an opportunity for demonstrating cultural responsiveness. There are advantages and disadvantages to this idea, and it would expose the teacher and the curriculum to risk. Firstly, consulting the learners teachers on their arrival could be problematic.

Learners would need guidance on how to engage in such a process. It may be unusual for students used to an Arab setting in which these SATs operate, namely computing science, to discuss their expectations of the course of learning they are about to embark on. Such a notion is radical, even in many New Zealand contexts. Secondly, it could be difficult to modify the programme of study at short notice to fit any preferences stated by the SATs. In addition, a curriculum design which accommodates student contribution relies on clear communication between the students and the teacher, and an agreed understanding of what is meant by success. As Merriam (2007) explains, some aspects of social dynamics, such as success and communication are subjective. In the West success is often described in materialistic or vocational ways, but in the East it is relationship/friendship based. Communication style in a Western cultural orientation is direct, to the point, and emphasises clarity; whereas in an Eastern culture “communication is subtle, indirect, and often employs a third party” (Merriam, 2007, p. 9).

There are advantages of a such a consultative model of curriculum design. If managed carefully and skillfully, a curriculum amended in response to student contribution offers rich opportunities, such as deeper engagement in the course by the learners, a way to build cultural understanding amongst the teacher and the learners, more effective communication especially cross-cultural, and improved chances of success in achieving the learning outcomes.

Challenging learners can be a means of overcoming boredom, by getting learners to be active in their participation and using the support and stimulation of other learners (Boud & Prosser 2002). Perhaps a way of reducing boredom would be to deliberately engage with theory, despite the SATs’ saying the ISTE curriculum should avoid it. Perhaps the very area that the participants are reluctant to encounter could become a place for exploration, using active learning approaches that fully engage the learners. The Adult Education curriculum may offer a place for investigating those paradigms that the learners bring along, challenging them, and offering alternatives. Asking the participants to articulate their prior knowledge, beliefs and theories about learning and teaching could open up for discussion the value of those viewpoints, as well as the possibility of alternative ones. Providing new information for consideration, and perhaps introducing new ways to explore principles of the scholarship of learning and teaching, may lead to questions, such as whether or not such teaching approaches could be applied in their own context.

The NZT has an important role to play in both challenging SATs and also helping them to make sense of Western pedagogical paradigm. This role is captured in a word commonly used by participants in this case study: ‘explain’. I suggest this term indicates the processes in which a

teacher helps a learner to construct concepts, illuminate the subject with relevant theory, add new information, and connect learners' findings (as in project-based learning) to the wider perspectives of a discipline. The term explain is used by the SATs when they say "... explaining of the subjects and finding solutions to them", "... let us explain lectures more than one time", and "... they didn't explain to us how to prepare the lesson plan, how to plan subject / study materials". One states that he has learned to "never explain the lesson to the students while they are writing off the board, but the lesson should be explained to the students while they are concentrating". The role of a teacher in providing explanation connects with one of the seven critical factors espoused by Race (2010) as leading to successful learning, that is, 'making sense of things'. This process, which Race also describes as 'digesting', 'getting one's head round it', 'the light dawning' or 'gaining understanding', is perhaps the most important in most learning situations. In this context, explaining is an important task for the NZT, because it describes the practice of helping SATs to engage with theory, perhaps despite their reluctance, and providing the essential scaffolding when challenging learners to build new knowledge.

One way to respond to the difficulties posed when required to learn new education theories could be by the use of peer teaching activities, such as jigsaw. This offers participants a way to investigate and make sense of new information and build knowledge by explaining it to others, with the support of the teacher.

***Providing practice in response to Tensions 4 and 5: new teaching approaches, allocating more time to Adult Education, and learning environment contexts***

Responses to the remaining major tensions the participants experienced – a desire to find new methods and activities, and recognising the difference in context in the learning environments in Saudi Arabia versus New Zealand – may emerge by considering it alongside the next element in the framework for high quality learning activities - providing practice. The concept of providing practice within Boud and Prosser's (2002) framework includes demonstration of what is being learned, gaining feedback, reflection on learning, and developing confidence through practice. These objectives fit well with the SATs preference for practical delivery over theory.

A response to the participants desire to learn new teaching methods and activities could be to explore those new methods of learning they experienced first hand some while in Aotearoa New Zealand. One of those approaches which appealed to the participants in this case study I describe as inquiry-based learning or problem-based learning (PBL). These and other teaching methods that are novel for the SATs, not only may be explored as learners in the Adult Education

segment of their ISTE, but also recommended for inclusion as teachers in their micro-teaching sessions with each other. The intended learning outcome would be that they may be adopted on their return home, in their own learning contexts. However, as well as practising such activities, the underpinning theory and best practice needs to be learned, to ensure they are most effectively employed and ideally embraced. Using PBL, perhaps one topic under investigation by the cohort of SATs could be Western educational theories.

One way to provide practice and a way to incorporate more practical methods of learning could be addressed by increasing the number of micro-teaching opportunities for the SATs. Micro-teaching is scaled-down teaching conducted for five or ten minutes at a time, with only five or ten students, and can focus on one or a few aspects of a teacher's role and discrete skills, for example, a specific type of questioning (Andersen & Antes, 1971; Gage, 1978). These could be accompanied by feedback from an NZT, making connections to relevant theory. Each SAT could be required to include an activity or teaching method in their micro-teaching practice that is new to them, and suited to their context, such as simulating an active lecture to large groups.

However, increasing the opportunities for micro-teaching carries with it a risk of failure for any teachers who are learning new teaching approaches, especially novices. It is important early on to experience a degree of success for a change in practice to increase the potential for it to take hold, and hopefully become embedded into ongoing practice. This should not be underestimated, as it is difficult to change teachers' perceptions of teaching (Ho, Watkins, & Kelly, 2001). Research has shown the limited impact of single, standalone courses on prospective teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices (Bennett, Okinaka, & Xiao-yang, 1988, April; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Grant & Koskella, 1986). Nevertheless, preparation for each micro-teaching session would present the opportunity to introduce novel methods which the SATs say they are keen to learn.

One area where it might be impractical for providing practice for international SATs is in responding to the concern expressed by the participants that the ISTE experience was not relevant to teachers of large classes. Rather than try to establish an opportunity to practice teaching large groups while in New Zealand, two approaches may be worth considering. Firstly, investigate the findings of an AUTC report (Australian University Teaching Committee, 2006). The report advocates using different models of teaching in large classes, citing models of teaching put forth by Joyce, Weil and Calhoun (2000), that stressed the importance of adopting a multiple-models approach to teaching students with a range of skills and backgrounds. Secondly, by acting on a request by the SATs to observe practitioners in a New Zealand setting similar to their own. They say, "I want to attend lectures for different teachers and different situations", and "we want to

attend a lecture of computer so we can observe it, what problems are there in teaching and sharing solutions to teaching of solutions". The NZT might reflect with the SATs after their observations of other lecturers how to teach computing theory to large classes, and link these to underlying educational theories. There is longstanding evidence that use of exemplars can assist learners and learning, which observation could encompass.

Providing practice may be achieved through a suggestion by the SATs as a way of improving the Adult Education segment of their ISTE, that is, to allocate more *time* to it. However, the suggestion to increase the time allocation poses a dilemma for the NZT, because of time constraints. They include the length of the summer holiday break during which the ISTE usually takes place; the limited share of time with the learners during their stay – less than one-third of the 6-week visit in this case study was devoted to Adult Education; financial and other resources; stakeholder agreement; and willingness by the participants to stay away longer from family. Furthermore, the question may be asked as to what depth of learning about the complex issues surrounding teaching may be realised within a short timeframe. Expecting anything more than just surface-level training may be too ambitious.

Providing practice by expecting the participants to apply the key concepts behind effective *learning design* could offer a way to foster deep learning, to introduce Western pedagogical theories, and may help to foster discussion about many of the issues in the roles of the teacher in supporting learning. One participant's comment affirms the need for learning design theory, when he says, "... but they didn't show us how to prepare the subject, every person prepare the subject according to his / her way, some of us even extemporize the subject, [however] they didn't explain to us how to prepare the lesson plan, how to plan subject / study materials". Learning about the practice of applying the principles underpinning learning design could be a key consideration in an Adult Education curriculum. This will involve, as all quality learning experiences can, exposure to information and ideas, experiential engagement, and reflective dialogue about the subject and/or the learning process (Fink, 2003). Constructive alignment of learning outcomes, assessment and learner activities not only could be employed but also studied a hallmark of good learning design.

Studying design for learning can also introduce discussion about ways to manage teacher interventions which do not relate to learning, such as responding to student disengagement and boredom issues. Good learning design would include making explicit the learning outcomes early in a session (P. Race, 2010). It would build in opportunities for providing feedback, feed up and feed forward during a session (Hattie, 2009). Modelling sound learning as part of the ISTE, and

using active learning approaches which involve the participants practising such principles, ideally could lead to a deep approach to learning. Finding more time to provide practice using new teaching approaches, and applying the principles underpinning good learning design, may provide some responses to the tensions identified in the themes.

In summary, I have used Boud and Prosser's (2002) framework for high quality learning activities to identify possible responses to the tensions identified in the themes. The ISTE could be developed to explore other ways to engage learners, for example, by storytelling to elicit interest in Adult Education topics, acknowledging the learning context and the learner, using a variety of ways to provide challenge, using PBL, jigsaw and other methods new to the SATs by which they may explore the theories of learning and teaching, introducing learning design concepts, and recognising the sites of application of knowledge, which are culturally entrenched. The framework has also offered a starting point for developing a model of in-service teacher training for international learners, which would incorporate a further dimension: deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching. This is the focus of the next section.

## **Implications for inter-relationships**

### ***A proposed model that includes deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching***

In this section I propose a model for teaching SATs, based on the findings of this study. Supported by the principles and practice underpinning learning design, and providing practice using new teaching approaches, it incorporates a cultural component - *deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching* (Bowers & Flinders, 1990; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas, 1991).

To help SATs develop their identity as professional teachers deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching (DACRT) can become a necessary element within a programme of ISTE to foster engagement and achieve learning outcomes. An NZT wishing to respond to the inevitable tensions that students experience within a Western setting, such as New Zealand, will need to accommodate intercultural understanding and to overcome any existing stereotypes and prejudices about the 'Other' (Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2005a). A culturally anchored model could validate, facilitate, liberate, and empower SATs by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success (Gay, 2000, p. 44). SATs and NZTs are 'bearers of cultures' (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, p. 88), and they bring their own cultural agency to the ISTE programme. Methods which acknowledge the ways culture influences learning will be a valuable

element in building the knowledge bases used in teacher education (G. P. Smith, 1998, p. 19), and may be applicable to both international and domestic ISTE.

A DACRT model needs to accommodate two identities participants carry with them into ISTE, one as a student and the other as a teacher. To recognise the first identity, as a learner, the model includes the five premises of Ladson-Billings' *student*-centered model of 'culturally relevant teaching'. Recognising the second identity, as a teacher, the model accommodates *teacher* attitudes and expectations (Gay, 2000). It prepares teachers "to be respectfully sensitive to the cultures of their students, to learn about and know the cultures of their students, and to use understandings about how culture influences learning in their day to day planning for teaching students" (G. P. Smith, 1998, p. 20). Teachers need to know how to examine their own cultural assumptions to understand how these shape their starting points for practice, because "efforts to reduce the gap between cultures of students and the often unexamined norms of teachers are one major aspect of culturally responsive teaching" (Banks et al., 2005, p. 244).

A DACRT model needs to embrace what Cortazzi and Jin call 'learning across cultures', that invites cultural synergy, in which they claim "neither side loses – both gain" (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, p. 88). A cultural synergy sees a mutual effort of both teachers and students to understand each other's three cultures, namely academic cultures, cultures of communication and cultures of learning. The understanding of these three cultures has mutual advantages, because the effort to understand others' principles of interpretation expands pedagogical worldview, and hopefully leads to a win-win situation for those involved.

Implementing a DACRT model in short-term ISTE for SATs (and potentially for New Zealand-resident teachers) will require the adoption of Gay's four foundational pillars of culturally responsive teaching (2000, p. 44). These include, teacher attitudes and expectations, cultural communication in the classroom, culturally diverse content in the curriculum, and culturally congruent instructional strategies.

### ***Teacher attitudes and expectations***

A first deliberate act of culturally responsive teaching could involve clarifying the NZT's and the SATs' attitudes and expectations about learners and learning. Naming of expectations of the particular group will avoid the risk of generalisation, begin the process of improving classroom and cross-cultural communication, and introduce and clarify different views of education. A good starting place will be to ask how much education itself, which is a core element of any culture, is valued. For example, in this case study the SATs, as Muslim, are raised to consider education as a

valued and sought after commodity for its own sake. Both the Qur'an and Hadith contain numerous passages exhorting believers to indulge in learning describe the nature of knowledge as taken to encompass broadly as 'all there is to know' (Albertini, 2003, p. 457), be it sacred or secular, metaphysical or physical, or theoretical or practical (Kamis & Mazanah, 2007, p. 23). A Western view of education, with an imperative of education as preparation for the workforce and employability, is not based in a religious worldview, but rather in a vocational context, especially in an institution in the ITP sector. An exercise in discussing what the participants understand by learning and learners, and describing the behaviours of an 'expert' learner in their own context, would help discover if there are shared views about the nature of successful learners. It would provide an overture for clarifying the SATs' expectations of their learners, themselves as learners, themselves as teachers, their NZT, and overall their ISTE. The NZT could explore those actions named by the SATs as belonging to 'expert' learners and ask for a commitment from them to be employed within the ensuing ISTE. One expression of cultural accommodation for different learners' habits might be through acknowledging the behaviours surrounding punctuality. For example, Saudi culture has a different view of timeliness from that of pakeha New Zealanders (Hofstede, 2001). Other areas might include attendance in class, expectations of self-directed learning, willingness to take part in building knowledge by learning and sharing in small groups with others (Watkins, 2003).

A second deliberate act of culturally responsive teaching is to find ways to communicate culturally. Language is culture expressing itself in sound. When genuine conversations begin there is a potential to reveal cultural shortcomings within the wider realm of the curriculum content, design and delivery. Conversations also provide a starting point for DACRT, which will require finding new ways to take advantage of culturally diverse areas in the curriculum to forge a new environment of educational equity and awareness. Teachers who learn how to recognize, honour, and incorporate the distinctive cultural attributes and personal abilities of students into their teaching strategies will discover outcomes that are more than just culturally beneficial, but also academic, so that "if this is done, then school achievement will improve" (Gay, 2000, p. 1).

One method of building up cultural communication in the classroom would be to ask the participants to identify aspects of their own cultural background. For example, common aspects of Saudi culture, such as foods or ritual celebrations. These could be taught to the NZT and other participants for a short period, ideally using a new teaching method and/or employing a learning activity that is new to them, which they have discovered while in New Zealand. This approach would offer a chance to celebrate their own cultural identities, inform the NZT about aspects of



Saudi culture, and furnish a vehicle for providing feedback on the teaching skills and method demonstrated during the activity. An additional step would be to ask for peer SATs to provide their colleague who is the SAT completing the activity, with feedback – which is likely to be a new model of assessment for people from the Middle East.

A further deliberate act of culturally responsive teaching relates to assessment methods and activities. Assessment provides an opportunity for the NZT to be sensitive to alternative educational approaches, while also introducing the SATs to Western educational views, such as self- or peer-assessment models. However, such a model challenges a Middle Eastern worldview, as Smith discovered first hand facilitating ISTE for teachers in the UAE. Smith reports that “I have experienced considerable resistance to the concept of peer and self-assessment during workshops on methods of assessment” which she attributes to the high power distance awareness (Hofstede, 2001) among participants who “are often reluctant to appear ‘critical’ of someone in a senior position to themselves” (L. Smith, 2007, p. 171). Handled with care, different assessment models offer a way to expand the knowledge of the SATs in an area of teaching practice common to all cultures. All teachers are required to assess, making judgements by evaluating evidence against criteria and providing feedback to the learner. There are advantages and disadvantages to introducing new ways of assessment. Handled poorly, the introduction of alternative assessment approaches may be simply reinforce a Western worldview that may not suit the home country context, and leave the SATs confused and/or resistant to change. Employing a critical pedagogy will help recognise the potential for the hegemony of Western ways of thinking to be embedded in the content of a curriculum designed for international SATs. However, if handled well and if such biases are acknowledged, then not only the dominant (e.g. Western) but also the subordinate (e.g. Saudi Arabian) cultures may be able to be fostered and mined for mutual benefit. It would provide new teaching approaches which the participants say they are seeking during their ISTE.

Deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching relate to curriculum design and implementation. A DACRT model begins by studying the learning outcomes embodied in a given course design, and the intent behind them. Then the ongoing and important challenge for the NZT is how to honour the aims of the programme of study, while adapting the curriculum content to take advantage of the learners’ cultural backgrounds in a deliberate way, within the constraints of the prepared curriculum of learning and teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is a holistic concept, not limited to the classroom, or even the institution, but wider still. It recognises the power of education to influence change, while fully realising that, without accompanying changes

in other aspects of schooling and society, the very best of teaching will not be able to accomplish the systemic reforms needed for ethnically diverse learners to receive genuine educational equity and achieve excellence. Culturally diversity in the curriculum is an inevitable outcome of deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching.

Introducing the SATs to new ways of learning could include not only Western examples but also kaupapa Māori pedagogy. The NZT could introduce an alternative to the familiar deductive approach, which comes naturally to SATs. They may find it easier to engage with the content of the ISTE curriculum by using alternative options, for example, poutama, te whare tapa wha, tuakana-teina (Ministry of Education, 2012). These may be a good fit because, as Dwairy (Dwairy, 1997, 1998, 2004) maintains, it is mainly the educated middle class Arabs living in urban areas that fit into a bicultural category of Arab society. It would need to be confirmed that a given cohort would come from a middle class sector of Saudi society, however the participants may find a Maori educational view interesting, relevant and closer to an Arab worldview than traditional Western strategies. Exposure to non-Western modes of learning and knowing “will not only enlarge our own individual understanding, but enhance our practice as educators” (Merriam, 2007, p. 16). In any culture we need assistance to understand alternative worldviews, because in order to learn we all need interventions from outside ourselves, whether these are the direct influence of others or their indirect influence transmitted through learning resources (Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993). A DACRT model includes culturally congruent strategies, for example identifying those teaching skills that support learning in the home context of the SATs to develop the professional understandings that form their identity as teachers

Finally, at a macro level, a DACRT model will embrace culturally congruent strategies that involve a critical pedagogical view. King, et al (1997) offer a six-phase model for multi-cultural teacher education. Their model is deliberately structured to move participants beyond simple exploration or celebration of individual differences “to an examination of power, oppression, and domination through both sociohistorical and sociocontemporary lenses” (King, Hollins, & Hayman, 1997, p. 20). Ultimately, success of such a model will depend on social action, not only cultural exchange. Each deliberate act of culturally responsive teaching can eventually lead to outcomes that benefit all those involved, and a way forward to achieving the common good. In the classrooms of culturally responsive teachers, the methods of instruction and assessment, the curriculum, and the classroom climate work together to support academic achievement of all students (Banks et al., 2005, p. 245).

## Chapter 7 - Overview

This research study aimed to find out the reasons for the dissatisfaction of groups of SATs undertaking in-service professional development in Aotearoa New Zealand. There was a lack of understanding by NZTs of the expectations of these international teachers, gaps in the literature, and assumptions embedded in the curriculum being offered. These issues provided an opportunity to investigate the views of one such cohort, and to discover what could comprise future ISTE for international teachers. To that end, the question arose, how do Saudi Arabian teachers of adult learners experience learning about teaching from New Zealand teacher educators? Subsequently I have asked what are the implications at an institutional level, e.g. CPIT? More broadly, what could comprise a model of deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching for ISTE in general?

During the investigation I explored cultural and pedagogical literature to build a deeper understanding of the issues. The knowledge I have gained through both the reading and the empirical research might impact on future teaching and research. This single case study can be viewed as the first cycle of an action research project for improving the experiences of the visiting SATs undertaking ISTE.

The findings revealed four main tensions for the participants. The priority they gave to learning English language over Adult Education; dealing with boredom, both their own and that of their own students, and uncertainty about ways to manage student behaviour. These are associated with the role of the teacher in the inter-relationship between student and teacher. The participants expressed a desire for their ISTE to be practical, involving learning new teaching methods and skills, rather than theory. Finally tensions arose from what they regarded as misunderstanding by the NZT about the differences in the Saudi Arabian and New Zealand learning environments, for example with large classes. Some of these tensions may have arisen because of a mismatch between the learning outcomes described in the course descriptor that the SATs read prior to their arrival in New Zealand and the actual ISTE curriculum designed for them. In addition, I have discovered that the SATs may have not understood the cultures in the New Zealand learning environment and Western educational world views.

## Implications for teaching

The implications of the findings relating to teaching include both curriculum design and inter-relationships between learner and teacher. The research revealed that the cultural capital a teacher and learner bring to the context of the learning environment influence the learning process. The SAT's experience of their ISTE will have been influenced by Arab views of the teacher's roles and the inter-relationships between the SATs and NZT. Western assumptions about learning and learners influence the curriculum design of ISTE in Aotearoa New Zealand. These assumptions could be explored through the lens of other pedagogical world views, such as Arab or kaupapa Maori ways of learning, when reviewing the teaching of the ISTE.

Communication can be strongly influenced by culture and cause misunderstanding. Miscommunication in the learning environment may have occurred in this case study in three broad areas; the cultures of learning, through the philosophies and theories of learning and teaching; academic cultures, through the practices of vocational teaching; and through the cultures of communication themselves. In the area of communication, a question arises regarding what might be appropriate interpersonal interactions in the learning environment between Islamic male SATs and a female NZT, such as touching and non-touching languages, as well as verbal and written communication.

Another area for potential misunderstanding in this case could have arisen from secular versus faith-based education systems. Despite a common respect for, and valuing of, education for its own sake by both Arab and Western societies, they expect different outcomes. One educational system has primarily economically-based objectives for learning, leading to employment, while the other aspires to improve the learner at a personal, spiritual level. In Islam the purpose of seeking knowledge is ultimately to become a good man, and not a good citizen of the secular state. Although some studies show disparaging views towards Western ethical behaviour are held by Arab students and some Arab scholars, these SATs choose to study in the West as sojourners interested in English language and Western ways of living, and did not report concerns based upon religious matters. However, it would be interesting to find out to what extent their religion influences the experience of SATs and other international students while in New Zealand, and how the ISTE could be designed to accommodate it better.

Economics and power are important factors in studying culture and educational systems. Using a critical pedagogy we might be able to identify any hegemony behind a curriculum designed for international students. Some of the literature suggests epistemological

ethnocentrism exists, such as where Western ways of thinking are embedded into the curriculum for non-Western learners. In fact, these SATs were purposefully seeking Western approaches. The participants' explained that they came to New Zealand seeking new teaching activities to take home. They were overt about their reasons for wishing to learn the English language, relating it to the demands of teaching computing studies.

The 42 hours allocated to the Adult Education segment of the ISTE course may have been insufficient to lead to a change in professional practice, confirmed by the SATs request for more time on future courses. The field of teacher education is wide and complex, accommodating three broad areas of knowledge, skills and dispositions for a teacher to acquire. Added to such complexity, for the teacher educator there is a tension between the desire by the SATs to learn new, practical, methods of teaching - a surface-level 'tips and tricks' approach – versus a deeper approach that might include teaching the associated theories that underpin teaching methods. The participants' reports were positive (as learners) about their experience when involved in small-group and inquiry-based methods while they learning English, but were they less enthusiastic (as teachers) about learning the theory associated with such active, student-centered learning approaches.

As well as the DACRT model there may be other ways to improve the outcomes of future ISTE courses. Firstly, a revision of the information provided to participants beforehand, to address a possible reason for the dissatisfaction by the SATs. The wording of the course descriptor could reflect the course content more clearly to help clarify expectations prior to the course.

A second change for future ISTE courses could be for teachers in the English language segment of the ISTE to employ the language of the scholarship of teaching and learning. This would reinforce the core concepts discussed in the Adult Education segment of the course, as well as improve the understanding of some Western educational world views, while learning the English language. Since language is culture expressing itself in sound, this may be a first step towards evolving a 'third place' in which both cultures of the NZT and the SATs are accepted, while a shared way of working is mutually agreed for the purposes of the ISTE.

A third way to improve future ISTE courses would be at an institutional level. By enhancing pastoral support for the participants, who are likely to be experiencing some aspects of stress from culture shock, they could be assisted towards the adjustment phase in their new environment. Those involved with the visit of the SATs, foremost with the NZT, may be encouraged to increase their knowledge of the visitors' worldviews, such as Arab and Muslim customs, values and beliefs. If visiting teachers and host country staff embrace a cross-cultural

perspective, both parties can acquire deepened insights into the other's cultures, and adopt a new cultural stance. This would build up intercultural communicative competence.

As a result of this research I have become better able to discuss the findings with the CPIT Teacher Education team, so that together we may explore possible developments in the curriculum for ISTE. We are able to review and debate the strategies for implementing the model of deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching proposed in Chapter 6. Together we might create new ones. The DACRT model can be used as a basis for learning conversations amongst ourselves, and with other tertiary teachers for ISTE for New Zealand teachers.

### **Implications for future research**

This single case study is by definition limited in scope. If it were to continue on as a larger action research project, then further research could explore the diverse factors that influence ISTE.

The literature says that teacher expectations of their students can strongly influence the academic success. Ethnocentric views and other preconceptions affect our perceptions of people from cultures different to our own. These are used to interpret and assess others' words, actions, and academic performance. This case study did not investigate the perceptions of the NZT about the SATs, but this could be an area for further investigation. What would NZT's say about their experience of teaching teachers from cultures different to their own? What are the main factors influencing their roles of a teacher educator of students from cultures different from their own? What suggestions might NZTs make to improve the ISTE for teachers from other cultures and educational systems? How important for SATs is the gender of the teacher educator in helping them engage with studying ISTE. Research into how teachers, and teacher educators, learn to engage in successful practices is an emerging area of investigation. It would be a most complex kind of research, because it requires tracking not only what and how teachers learn, but also how they use what they have learned and to what effect.

Evaluating the effect of any ISTE course is problematic. How could a change in behaviour by teachers following an ISTE short course be shown? It is difficult to evaluate the effect of 'black box' of professional practice that exists between a teacher and learner. More so the second 'black box' between the teacher educator and the teacher, and trying to evaluate any consequent effect on student achievement. However, I would add a further intermediary step beyond the two 'black box'es - a third box that represents the cultural and educational shifts that might occur during an ISTE programme. What influence could the ISTE and the NZT make to the cultural and educational

world views of the participants? Rather than a 'black box' perhaps I would describe this third box, with its focus on cultural change, as having three colours: te miro mā, te miro whero, te miro pango - white, red and black.

## **Conclusion**

The world needs effective teachers. We need teachers who are reflective, flexible, technology literate, knowledgeable, imaginative, resourceful, enthusiastic, team players. Effective teachers are conscious of student differences and ways of learning. The need is as important in the Middle East as it is in New Zealand. Therefore the ISTE programme, ideally supported by stakeholders with a similar view, needs to meet the educational needs of SATs who travel so far to undertake professional development during their annual holidays.

Perhaps embedding a model of deliberate acts of culturally responsive teaching would help develop a more effective teacher education programme. One that is guided by a coherent conceptual framework with interlinked elements. I propose a model that is culturally anchored, and aims to validate, facilitate, liberate, and empower SATs. It would simultaneously cultivate their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success. However, any model of teaching is at best neutral. It is only as effective as the commitment of a teacher to embrace it. A purposeful endeavour to continue to improve ISTE for SATs would also need to involve professional conversations amongst the teacher educators. These could form a part of action research project with an aim to improve the cultural integrity of the programme. The interaction and inquiry that would occur in such a project could benefit all the participants.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for teachers after completion of course

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire as part of the research project *Teaching international teachers*. By submitting this form you are agreeing for your replies to be included in the project. You have the right to withdraw from this survey by advising the researcher at any time before you hand back the questionnaire.

You may write in any language you choose. Your comments will be translated into English and then given to Gerard Duignan to read after you have left New Zealand.

This survey is confidential and you are not required to identify yourself.

***Translation of English version into Arabic will be provided verbally by a translator.***

Question	Responses
<p><i>Introduction</i></p> <p>How you have experienced learning about teaching from New Zealand teacher educators?</p> <p>What have been the things you have enjoyed most?</p> <p>What would you like to have been different?</p> <p>To what extent have those expectations been met while on the teaching course?</p>	
<p><i>Yourself as a teacher</i></p> <p>How do you think you have changed as a teacher since being at CPIT?</p> <p>What has been the most valuable thing you have learned about yourself as a teacher while in New Zealand?</p>	
<p><i>Cultural</i></p> <p>Tell me about how you think Saudi Arabian students learn best?</p> <p>How well does this course suit Saudi Arabian styles of learning?</p> <p>What aspects, especially cultural differences, do not suit Saudi Arabian styles of learning?</p>	
<p><i>Course content</i></p> <p>To what extent have you found the content of this course at CPIT has met your needs / or not met your needs as a teacher?</p> <p>What have been the most valuable / least valuable things in this course for you?</p> <p>What changes would you like to make to this course? a) design, b) delivery</p> <p>What has helped your learning in this course?</p> <p>What has hindered / limited your learning in this course?</p> <p>What suggestions would you make to improve this course?</p>	

*Please continue onto other pages to provide a full answer.*

## Confidentiality agreement

University of Canterbury

College of Education

Research Project: *Teaching international teachers: How Saudi Arabian teachers experience learning about teaching from New Zealand teacher educators*

Gerard Duignan

### Contract for interpreting of recorded interviews and written questionnaires

I .....

have agreed to interpret the research data from the recordings and written questionnaires into English for the above project. I agree to maintain complete confidentiality in regard to anything I may hear or read in connection with the research.

All tapes, computer discs and paper copies of the research data will be kept securely while I have them for the purposes of transcription. All this material will be returned to Gerard Duignan on completion of the transcription and any electronically stored information will be deleted.

Interpreter .....

Researcher .....

Date .....

## **Appendix 2b – Confidentiality agreement for the translator**

### **Confidentiality agreement**

University of Canterbury

College of Education

Research Project: *Teaching international teachers: How Saudi Arabian teachers experience learning about teaching from New Zealand teacher educators*

Gerard Duignan

### **Contract for Transcription of Recorded Interviews**

I .....

have agreed to transcribe the research data from the recordings into written form for the above project. I agree to maintain complete confidentiality in regard to anything I may hear or read in connection with the research.

All tapes, computer discs and paper copies of the research data will be kept securely while I have them for the purposes of transcription. All this material will be returned to Gerard Duignan on completion of the transcription and any electronically stored information will be deleted.

Transcriber .....

Researcher .....

Date .....

## Appendix 3 – Information sheet

### Information Sheet

University of Canterbury

College of Education

You are invited to participate in the following research project:

*Teaching international teachers: How Saudi Arabian teachers experience learning about teaching in a New Zealand context.*

The aim of this project is to identify ways the teachers view their experience of learning about teaching and learning at CPIT.

Your involvement in this project will involve completing a written questionnaire at the end of your course at CPIT, and two face-to-face focus group interviews with some other members of your class. The researcher, Gerard Duignan from CPIT Adult Education, will record your comments on an audio recorder and take notes. The focus group interviews should take approximately 60 minutes.

You have the right to withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information provided, by advising the researcher at any time before the recordings are completed. There is unlikely to be any follow-up to this investigation and there are no foreseeable risks in the procedures.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public without their consent. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms will be used and any identifying material disguised.

The information you provide will be stored securely and only used for the purposes of this project. It will be viewed only by the researcher, his supervisor, the interpreter and CPIT international student advisor, and a transcriber. These will sign an agreement of confidentiality.

The project is being carried out as part of a Masters in Teaching and Learning by Gerard Duignan under the supervision of Dr Jane McChesney, at the College of Education, University of Canterbury (Tel. +64 3 345 8102). She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

The project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

## Appendix 4 – Consent form

### Consent Form

University of Canterbury

College of Education

*Teaching international teachers: How Saudi Arabian teachers experience learning about teaching in a New Zealand context.*

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

I understand also that I may withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided, at any time before the audio-recordings are completed.

NAME (please print): .....

Signature:

Date:

Researcher:

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